

PERFECTIONISTS

EXAMIN'D;

OR,

Inherent PERFECTION in this Life,
NO SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE,

To which is affix'd,

The Rev. Mr. *WHITEFIELD*'s Thoughts
on this Subject, in a Letter to Mr. *WESLEY*.

By *WILLIAM FLEETWOOD*.

*Tho' I were righteous, yet would I not answer him: but I would
make Supplication to my Judge.* Job ix. 15.

*If I justify my self, mine own Mouth shall condemn me: If I say
I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse.* Ver. 20.

*What is Man, that he should be clean? and he which is born
a Woman, that he should be righteous?*

Scire tuum nihil est, nisi te scire hoc sciat alter. *Perf. Sen.*

— *Si quid novisti rectius istis.*

Candidus imperti: Si non his utere nesciam. *Hor. Ep. iv. Lib. I.*

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. ROBERTS in *Warwick-lane*. 1741.
(Price One Shilling.)

THE SPECIAL ADDITIONAL

INFORMATION
TO THE

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Some of the
most important
features of the
new system
are the
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DOWN
Printed for J. Roberts in Westminster, 1771
(Price One Shilling)



THE P R E F A C E.

AS I am fully perswaded in my own Mind, (as far as I know my self) that an ostentatious View was not my Motive in publishing this Piece; so I am well assur'd that any of the true experimental Children of God, could, from their own Experience, as well as Knowledge in Divine things, have said as much, or more to the purpose, than is contain'd in this Book. But having the Vanity to think, that there are some things offer'd, correspondent with the Believer's Experience, and agreeable to the Truth as it is in Jesus; I thought, that to make it publick, might (if it pleas'd the Lord) be of some Advantage, in guarding his People against the Asserters of, as well as the Doctrine of Perfection itself; a Doctrine promotive of Pride, and destructive of a true Dependance and Reliance on our glorious Head and exalted High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Most of the Objections which are answered, together with the Glosses which are by them put on some Texts, are not put in by way of Supposition, but are, in general, what I my
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P R E F A C E.

self have heard from their own Mouths. I have us'd much Plainness of Speech on this Subject; because, I think it justly requires it, that their erroneous Doctrine may be openly shew'd to all People. 'Tis certain many will say, I might have given way to my Superiors, and let them have taken the thing in Hand; and that my Youth and small Experience, might have been just Impediments to making it publick. To which I answer, that I do, and hope shall always pay a due respect to my Superiors; and had there been any thing of this Nature publick (I mean, in answer to our modern Perfectionists Scheme, and Method of proving their Doctrine) this should not: And as to my Youth, I am perswaded, if the Believer finds any thing agreeable with his Experience, and the Word of God, and which is made of use to establish his Faith; he will forget the Author, and look up with Thanks to the Donor of every good and perfect Gift. If any thing, therefore, be said, which leads thee into the Truth, or establishes thy present Faith (Reader) let me assure thee, I have my end, and may God have the Glory, who worketh all things in us, and by us, to the Praise and Glory of his Grace.

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THE
PERFECTIONISTS

EXAMIN'D, &c.

IF ever the Prophecies of our Saviour and his Apostles, concerning the perilous Times which should come in the last Days, are to be fulfill'd and accomplish'd, the present Age will surely do it. Certainly, never such a Flood of complicated Errors spread this Nation, since it has been favoured with the Gospel and the true Preachers of it, as at this Day we see in every Place to abound. If all the open and profess'd Enemies of the Doctrines of the Gospel, had more vigorously set up themselves in Opposition to Truth, they would not have been so destructive to it, as the present Advancers of Religion now are; I mean those who are stil'd *Methodists*: Not that I would be thought to suppose, that every particular Person who bears that Name is an Opposer of the Truth, for a Person is in reality never the worse for going under a Title which the World calls scandalous; and I know, and am assur'd, that some few of them are zealous

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lously affected for, and desirous of the spread of the Truths of the everlasting Gospel: But in the general I am perswaded, that the modern *Methodists* (improperly so call'd) are more destructive to Religion, than the *Papists* or *Mahometans*: The last shew visibly to all the World, that they are utter Enemies to the Truth of God's Word; but these, under a specious Pretence of particularly advancing the Cause and Interest of Christ, directly oppose it, in declaring and setting forth such Doctrines, as are diametrically opposite to those delivered in the sacred Oracles: And we may justly (in the Apostle's Words to *Timothy*) say of these, That *they are such as have a Form of Godliness, whilst they deny the Power of it: Such as creep into Houses and lead captive silly Women*; 2 Tim. iii. 5, 6. This Character is certainly applicable to some of these Men; for, by their artful Insinuations, and outward Sanctity, what Numbers have they drawn after them! and, indeed, for the most part, their Attendants are *silly Women*, and such as, in the things of God, know not their Right Hand from their Left. These Teachers plainly shew themselves to be some of those also, whom the Apostle *Peter* prophesy'd of, 2 Pet. ii. *Such as privily bring in damnable Heresies, denying the Lord that bought them*; these, the Apostle tells us, ver. 2. *many shall follow, by Reason of whom, the way of Truth shall be evil spoken of*. This Character fitly tallies with some of these false Teachers; the Apostle says, they are such as *privily bring in damnable Heresies*; and how craftily and sily have these brought in Universal Redemption, Free Will, and all other of the *Arminian* Doctrines? Damnable Heresies indeed! destructive of all Truth,

Truth, subversive of the whole tenour of the Scriptures; and what makes them damnable? Striking at the Attributes of God, such as his Wisdom, Power, and Justice; which might be easily demonstrated, but it has lately been done in a Pamphlet, entitled, *Free Grace indeed*. And all this is done by these People, under a Pretence of separating from the Church of *England*, because (forsooth) they preach not the Truth; when at the same time they themselves vigorously, and with all their might, oppose it. But, how, it may be objected, do these Persons deny the Lord that bought them, as the Persons in the fore-quoted Text are said to do? I answer they deny the Lord, in striking at his Wisdom and his Power: At his Wisdom, in doing that, which, if he be omniscient, he knew would be frustrate, viz. dying for every individual Person. And at his Power, in not being able to do that which he design'd. Now, if they say, he had Power to perform his Purposes, but would not; then their Doctrine of universal Love, and Designs of Grace to all, must fall to the Ground. Thus it is, they deny the Lord that bought them. But, however, it is not my present Purpose to enquire into all their Ways and Doctrines; for I fear if I should, I should at last pull off their Mask in such a manner, as to discover them to be more like *French* Enthusiasts, or rank Papists, than true Christians. But what I have now in view is (as the Lord shall assist) to examine and disprove their new fangled Doctrine of Perfection, attainable, as they assert, in this Life. And here it will be proper to observe, what they mean by Perfection: There is, say they, a twofold sort, or rather, a twofold state of it. The first is a

Power, which, through Grace, they have over all the Stirrings and Motions of Sin in them. The second is, a total Freedom from all Motions of Sin whatever.

These, as I have understood from Conversation with some of the Asserters of this Doctrine, are the two sorts, or states of Perfection. In handling this Point, we shall observe the following Method.

I. Examine the Experiences of some of the Old and New Testament Saints; whether they ever found, that they had attained either of the Perfections above-mentioned.

II. We shall enquire into some of the Promises, which are constituted for the Comfort of God's own Children; and see whether any can be found that favour of this Doctrine.

III. We shall answer the Texts they bring to prove it; and discover wherein their Mistake lies, and by what means they (probably) acquire this Notion.

IV. We shall shew, that some dangerous Consequences attend it.

V. We shall in brief shew, where our true Gospel Perfection lies.

I. Then, let us examine the Experiences of the Old and New Testament Saints, whether they ever attained either of these Perfections.

We will begin with *Noah*. 'Tis true it is said, *Gen. vi. 9.* that he was a *just and a perfect Man*; but let us observe, it was *in his Generations*; he was comparatively so; he was *perfect*, if we look into the Wickedness of the Times in which he liv'd: But that he was in the *Perfectionist's* sense *perfect*, i. e. free from Sin, will appear to be false, if we look into the 9th Chap. it is there recorded of him, *Ver. 21.* that he *drank of the Wine and was drunk*. No Mark of his *Perfection*! Nay, this Act of his plainly shews, that tho' he had liv'd upwards of six hundred Years, and a renew'd Person ('tis probable) a great Part of the Time, yet he had not attain'd to the first state of *Perfection*, viz. Power over Sin; he could not restrain his inordinate Passions, *he drank of the Wine and was drunk*. Let us see whether *Abraham*, who is call'd *the Father of the Faithful*, was *perfect*: We have an Instance to the contrary, in his dissembling with *Abimelech* concerning his Wife, *Gen. xx. 5, 11, 12.* he shew'd his Imperfection here two ways.

1st, In his disbelieving the Care and Protection of God over him in a wicked Place.

2dly, In his endeavouring to avoid what he fear'd, viz. that they would kill him for his Wife's sake, by telling a downright Lie; it being no better, because he did it that he might deceive the People, for he expected (as it happen'd) that by saying, she was his Sister, they would not suspect her to be his Wife. Thus then we see this great Man was not *perfect*: And as for his Wife, she was so far from *Perfection*, that she told a direct Lie in the Presence of the Angels, *Gen. xviii. 12, 13, 14, 15.* When they told *Abraham* that *Sarah* should have a Son, 'tis said,

ver. 12. That *she laugh'd within herself, &c.*
 ver. 13. *And the Lord said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a Child, which am old?* ver. 14. *Is any thing too hard for the Lord?* ver. 15. *Then Sarah deny'd, saying, I laugh'd not; for she was afraid.* We may here also take Notice of two things.

1. That her Laugh was attended with a Doubt. Here's one Mark of her Imperfection; she in some Measure disbeliev'd the Promise.

2. We may observe, that to heighten her Sin, and discover her Imperfection the more, she solemnly declares, that she *did not laugh*; or otherwise, that she did not doubt.

But again, the Patriarchs never arrived to *Perfection*, as we read of: We read to the contrary in *Acts vii. 9.* that they, *mov'd with Envy, sold Joseph into Egypt*, and after they had done, to deceive *Jacob* their Father, they made a Pretence, that *Joseph* was slain. *Moses* and *Aaron*, the Leaders and Guiders of the *Israelites*, were not *perfect*; for they were deny'd the Land of *Canaan*, for *striking* the Rock, when they were only commanded to *speak* to it. *Job* utterly disclaims any thing of inherent, absolute Perfection; altho' the Holy Ghost stiles him, *chap. i. ver. 1. A perfect and an upright Man*: Yet, says he, (*chap. ix. ver. 20.*) *If I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse.* Now the Holy Ghost calls him perfect in one of these three Senses.

1st, In the Lord Jesus: As he was interested in his absolutely perfect Righteousness. Or,

2^{dly}, In a comparative Sense; as he was the most upright in the wicked Age he liv'd in. Or,

3^{dly},

3dly, In regard to the Perfection of the Work of the Spirit within, *i. e.* the Grace which he receiv'd in itself, and abstractedly considered, was perfect: But as to any other Perfection, *Job* professes himself not to have attain'd it. Let us observe, that he had not attain'd to a Power over all Sin; for he confesses, that he had utter'd what was *too wonderful*, and *things that he understood not*, ch. xlii. ver. 3. and in the *xltb Chap.* he confesses himself to be *vile*. This shews he was no *Perfectionist*; no, he *abhorrd himself in Dust and Ashes*, ch. xlii. ver. 6.

Let us now see how it was with *David*, who was a Man after God's own Heart: Let us see what sort of a Perfectionist he was: And him we often find under the Hidings of God's Face on Account of his Sins, See *Psal. xxxviii. 4.* *For mine Iniquities*, says he, *are gone over my Head, as an heavy Burden, they are too heavy for me to bear.* What a sense of Sin and Corruption must *David* at this time have! how must he loath himself, when he cries out, *ver. 5. My Wounds stink and are corrupt, by Reason of my Foolishness.* *David* had been a long experienced Christian before he penn'd this Psalm; or else he could never have cry'd out as he does in *ver. 15.* with self-appropriation, *In thee, O Lord, do I hope; thou wilt bear, O Lord, my God: And in Psal. cxix. 25.* he cries out, *My Soul cleaveth to the Dust, quicken thou me according to thy Word.* Could *David's* Soul have cleav'd to the Dust, had he been perfect? I think not. And if he had had an Expectation of it, he would surely have pray'd for it in this Place; but he does not say, *Perfect me, O Lord, take sin totally away; but Quicken thou me, &c.*

Let us now take a View of two or three of the Prophets, and we shall find them in the imperfect way, as well as others. The Prophet *Isaiah* who had the greatest Light of, and Revelation concerning the Gospel Times, under a sense of his own Imperfection, cries out, *Isai. vi. 5. Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a Man of unclean Lips.* This is all I can find the Prophet speaks of himself: He had this one main thing to say, and that is, That he was *imperfect, a Man of unclean Lips.* But again, the Prophet *Jeremiah* declares, that neither he, nor none he knew were free from Sin: He shews this to be his Opinion by what he says, (*Lam. iii. 39, 40, &c.*) *Wherefore does a living Man complain? a Man, for the Punishment of Sins?* The Prophet by the Repetition, *a Man,* seems to speak in a way of Contempt, *q. d.* is it not a Wonder, that such a despicable, sinful Creature as *Man,* should be grumbling and complaining at the Dealings of his Maker with him, when he is continually sinning against, and provoking him? Is *Man,* poor, vain, empty *Man,* a fit and proper Person to argue on the Justness of God's afflicting him; when he is daily heaping Sin upon Sin, and by his Actions momentarily irritating the Almighty? Should such a Creature as this then, complain of any Punishment inflicted on him? Let us all (as we have just Occasion) lay our Hands on our Mouths, and justify God in all his Proceedings against us: For we have, and do continually Sin, and therefore, let us not (for Shame) complain of his Chastisements. This is what the Prophet means by repeating the Word *Man:* *Should a living Man complain, a Man, &c.* and in the 40th Verse he goes on, *Let us search and try*

try our Ways, and turn again to the Lord, q. d. We ought, since these Afflictions are come upon us, to search into, and try our ways; for we have surely merited all this: And, in the 42d Verse, he freely confesses, *We have transgress'd and rebell'd, &c.*

Thus we see (for it does not signify multiplying Examples) that all the Old Testament Saints, in all their Experiences and Declarations, give no Countenance to this *Perfection-Doctrine*. And the Holy Spirit in all his Relations of them, seems to have taken care, that their Imperfections should particularly be penn'd down, to shew us, that when we have attain'd to the highest Degree in Grace, we are but Men, frail, weak, imperfect Creatures.

We will now look amongst some of the *New Testament* Saints, and examine whether *their* Experiences reach'd this Perfection.

Some of our modern *Perfectionists* think, that the New Testament Saints are more perfect in their Experiences, than those of the Old Testament; for, say they, *we are not under the Law, but under Grace*. True: But this does not affect the present purpose: for, tho' the Old Testament Saints had all their Light and Knowledge by Types and Figures, and in this sense fell short of us: Yet, I am perswaded, they had as much of the sanctifying Influences of the Spirit, as any under the Gospel; and I think we may truly assert, that some of them had far greater Manifestations of the Lord, as their Portion, than in the generality these have. Witness *Abraham, Jacob, David, &c.* Nay, the Experience of the last, viz. *David*, is a Copy almost of every Believer's Experience; for there is hardly any thing that the Believer

Believer meets with (experimentally) but what may be found in *David's Psalms*. Therefore it is utterly needless to urge (what I know the *Perfectionists* do) viz. that we, under the Gospel Dispensation, have more of the influencing, sanctifying Operations of the Holy Spirit, than those under the Old Testament. For I argue thus; If it be absolutely necessary, that we under the Gospel Dispensation, be made inherently and completely perfect in Grace; it was also necessary, that those under the Old Testament should: But they did not attain this; therefore we likewise are not to arrive to it. For the Apostle says, there is *one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism*, Eph. iv. 5. Every Believer since the Foundation of the World, be he *Greek*, or *Jew*, Bond, or Free, has been, and is led by the same Spirit, unto the same Faith, and into the same Knowledge of himself, *i. e.* to see himself a vile, lost, undone Sinner, and incapable, in this State and World of Sin and Sorrow, to attain Perfection. But however; let us look amongst these New Testament Saints, and first of all, amongst the Apostles, who, if any were to be perfect, one would think, they were; but we find them as imperfect as other People: And, as for the Time of our Lord's being on Earth, they very frequently and particularly shew'd themselves to be so, by their Unbelief and Ignorance. We find in *Mark* iv. towards the latter end, they were all in great fear of being drown'd, and our Lord, after he had calm'd the Sea, cries out, *How is it that ye have no Faith?* What, had the Apostles no Faith at this Time? Certainly they had: Nay, the very Expression itself seems to imply as much. *How is it?* &c. that is, as if he had said, What, have

have I not been long enough with you, that you should trust and rely on my omnipotent Power? What, have you not already experienc'd and known enough of me, that I am God as well as Man? Have you not afore-time called me *the Christ*, and been enabled to act Faith on my Person, how is it you are now so weak? This (I think) is the import of the Question, *How is it that ye have no Faith?* Not that the Disciples were totally destitute of Faith, but that it was not then in exercise; they were got into an *imperfect, carnal* Frame. We find them also, after, as well as before our Lord's Death, under this Power of Unbelief. After he was risen, when the Women told them of the Vision they had seen, and how that the Lord was surely risen, 'tis said, that *their Words seem'd as idle Tales, and they believ'd them not*. Here is another Instance of their Imperfection. But here it may perhaps be ignorantly objected (as the Perfectionists are ignorant enough to start any silly Objection) that the Apostles were not yet fully brought into the glorious Light and Liberty of the Gospel, nor were so till the Day of Pentecost. To this we answer, that tho' they were not so fully enlighten'd in the Scripture, before the Day of Pentecost, as after; yet, 'tis certain, they were true experimental Believers long before: For, we find, when some of his Disciples left him, and walk'd no more with him, our Saviour immediately turns to the twelve, and says, *Will ye also, go away?* To which *Peter* (who was always zealously affected) answers for the rest, *To whom shall we go? Thou hast the Words of eternal Life, and we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*. What greater Declara-
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tions of Faith could be brought forth? Certainly, those who are led thus to acknowledge the Lord Jesus, are brought into the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God. And in *Matth. xvi. 15, 16, 17.* our Saviour, willing to try his Disciples Faith, after he had talk'd with them of the World's Opinion of him, says, *But whom say ye that I am?* Peter answers, *Thou art Christ the Son of the living God;* to which Confession our Lord answers, to shew that Peter's Faith was a true and saving one; *Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for Flesh and Blood hath not reveal'd it unto thee, but my Father, which is in Heaven, &c.* Hence and from many Passages, it is very plain, that the Apostles, tho' not so well acquainted with, and enlighten'd in the Scripture-Doctrines, before, as after the Day of Pentecost, were true Believers, and in the Objector's Words, *brought into the glorious Liberty of the Gospel:* I mean in their own Souls; tho' very often (as before observ'd) under the Power of Unbelief.

One would think that the Apostles, from the time of their Calling to our Saviour's Death, had been long enough (had it been attainable) to have been perfect, especially, seeing they were so constantly with our Saviour, and heard all his glorious Sermons, Admonitions, and Exhortations: And it seems a sort of a Wonder, that our Saviour did not perfect them himself before he went to Glory. No, say our *Perfectionists* (for I know this to be some of their Language) he told them he would send the Comforter, who was then indeed *with them, i. e.* as a transient Guest; but should afterwards be *in them*, as a constant Comforter, and they should be *continually* under his sanctifying and comforting Influences. But this

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Interpretation is a mere Perverſion of the Text; for it is to me very plain, that our Saviour in that Text, *John* xiv. 17. ſpeaks of two diſtinct Offices of the Spirit; the firſt is of a Comforter; *he is with you*, i. e. comforting and ſupporting your Faith; and the ſecond is of an Enlightner; *he ſhall be in you*, i. e. to enlighten and inſtruct your Underſtandings. And that he means this by being *in them*, is manifeſt from the Epithet he gives the Holy Spirit in the beginning of the Verſe, *viz. the Spirit of Truth*; this Spirit, *q. d.* which you have with you now as a Comforter, ſhall be *in you*, to enlighten and direct you into all Truth: And it ſeems to be for theſe three Reaſons, that the Spirit came down in ſuch a miraculous manner at the Day of Pentecoſt.

1^{ſt}, To give them Diversity of Tongues, that they might preach to Men of all Languages.

2^{dly}, That they might be able in their Preaching, to underſtand every myſterious Portion of Scripture. And,

3^{dly}, To enable them, thro' a miraculous Faith in Chriſt Jeſus, to heal Diſeaſes, or the like; for theſe Reaſons, and not to *perfect* them in Sanctification, was the Holy Spirit ſent at the Day of Pentecoſt.

But, however, ſince the *Perfectioniſts* will urge, that they, and all after them from the Day of Pentecoſt, had, and have more of the ſanctifying Influences of the Spirit, ſo as at laſt to *perfect* them; let us view them after this Day of Pentecoſt; and, I dare ſay, we ſhall find them ſtill imperfect. In the xvth of *Acts* we find *Paul* and *Barnabas* quarelling: Nay, it is recorded, that the Contention was ſo great, that they were oblig'd to ſeparate. Now, if we were to believe

a certain *Perfectionist* about Anger, we must conclude that *Paul* and *Barnabas* were not true Believers at this Time: For he asserts, that if we have the least Degree of Anger, we can't be the Children of God; we can't be true Believers. I wonder what that Gentleman thinks of *Jonah*; he was not angry with a Man like himself, but with the Almighty *Jehovah*, he was vex'd that the Lord should be merciful; and when the Lord speaks to him concerning the Gourd, and asks, whether he did well to be angry; he answers in a very peevish sort of a manner, *I do well to be angry, even to Death.* Alas! if every one that is at any time angry with another, must be excluded being true Believers, I will (in the Apostle's Words in another Case) say, *Who then can be saved?* But, however, *Paul* and *Barnabas* were true Believers, and yet it happen'd they were angry one with another: And if they were true Believers (which can't be deny'd) 'tis plain, that they (like other good People) were imperfect.

Let us now take a little Notice what *St. Paul* saith of himself, concerning his own Experience: And as we shall turn to the viith of the *Romans*, we shall endeavour to answer that absurd, ignorant Assertion, that *Paul* characterises a natural Man. The *Perfectionists* truly, tell us, that we have no more Texts to quote against their Doctrine but the viith of the *Romans*; there is all your Refuge, say they: But they quite forget what the Apostle in *Gal. v. 17.* says, where he speaks just in the same manner as he does in *Rom. viii.* *For the Flesh, saith he, lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh.—So that (observe it) ye cannot do the things that ye would.* Surely he was not characterising a natural Man here; and

and yet this is in the same Strain with that Expression, — *What I would, that do I not, &c.* and to the same Purpose likewise is *Col. iii. 5.* and *Eph. vi. 12.* &c. But let us, if possible, manifest to them (if they are not totally blinded), that the Apostle speaks of his own, as also of the Experience of other Believers in the viith of the *Romans*. And this we shall do in the following Method.

1st, Take notice to whom the Epistle is directed.

2dly, Of the Coherence of the Chapter with the preceeding one.

3dly, Enquire into the Marks and Characters which are given in it, of this pretended natural Man, and see to whom they most agree.

1st, Then let us take notice to whom the Epistle is writ (on which we shall be very brief) we find them by the 7th Verse of Chap. i. to be, *the beloved of the Lord call'd to be Saints, &c.* They were such as had tasted, that the Lord is gracious; such who had been call'd out of Darknets and superstitious Ignorance, into the glorious Light of the Gospel: They were once heathenish Idolaters; but now, thro' Grace, made obedient to the Faith of the Lord Jesus: To these the Apostle directs his Discourse, *To the beloved of the Lord, call'd to be Saints at Rome.* Let us just by the way remark the Order of the Titles, the Apostle gives these believing *Romans*.

1st, *Beloved of the Lord.* By which he intimates, that the Grace and Favour of God is the Source and Spring of all other spiritual Mercies and Privileges.

2dly, We may observe, that they are stild *the called.* By which we see, that effectual Vo-

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cation is the Fruit and Consequence of eternal Love and Favour.

3dly, We may take notice of the end to which they are call'd, *i. e.* to be Saints; *call'd to be Saints.* Whence note, the Ignorance of those, who say that eternal Designs of Salvation to some, shuts out Holiness; when we see here, that Holiness is the inseparable Consequence of this Love. Let us now in the

2d Place, Take notice of the Coherence of the viith with the preceeding Chapter. In the viith Chapter, the Apostle is discoursing of Believers being free from Sin and the Law, as to their condemning Power: *For*, says he, *Ver. 14. Sin shall not have Dominion over you; for ye are not under the Law, but under Grace.* That the Apostle means by Sin not having Dominion over them, that it should not have Power to curse them for the Commission of it, is very plain from the Reason he gives for the Assertion, *Ye are not under the Law, but under Grace.* What can the Apostle mean by their not being *under the Law*? Not that as they were under Grace, they might live as they list, and that there was no Law for their Obedience. This, I say, cannot be the meaning of it: Wherefore it must be, that as they were not under the Law, as to their Expectation of Salvation by their Obedience to it; as they had trusted, thro' Grace, to the Lord Jesus and his Righteousness, for their Justification; therefore, neither Sin nor the Law, should have any Power or Authority to condemn them. Having thus told them of their Freedom from the condemning Power of the Law, because Christ had fulfill'd it, and had in their places and stead suffer'd the Curses of it, which were due to them;
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and as they had subjected themselves to him, &c. he goes on to the end of the Chapter, to shew them, that all this should excite them to Obedience to Christ, and to follow after Righteousness; and tells them, that as the Wages of Sin, to which they were once Servants, was Death eternal; so now, *thro' Christ Jesus, the Gift of God is eternal Life*: And then he brings in the viith Chapter, still going on with the Thread of Discourse; for we must remember, that the Distinction of Chapters was not made in the Epistle, when first wrote; the whole Epistle being all one entire, consistent Thread of Discourse, one thing bringing in another; and then, by a continued Discourse on the Law, the viith Chapter comes in.

Ver. 1. *Know ye not, Brethren, (for I speak to them that know the Law) how that the Law has Dominion over a Man so long as he liveth.* The Words contain'd in the Parenthesis, our *Perfectionists* tell us, plainly manifest, that the Apostle directs his Discourse to a natural Man. But, I think, it plainly demonstrates the Reverse. And, I am perswaded, if they know any thing (by the Spirit) of the Law and themselves, they must own, that in their natural State they knew little or nothing of the Law of God: Nay, it may be, they never troubled themselves about it; or if they had any Thoughts of it, 'twas only in a superficial way. They thought if they had the Decalogue by heart, like other good People, they *knew* the Law sufficiently, and would have been mighty angry, had any Body told them they knew nothing (as they ought to have known.) The bare Knowledge of the external Commands of God's Law, is all the natural Man can have,

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and, indeed, it very well sufficeth him ; he thinks if he knows that, he knows enough: Such is the Blindness and Ignorance of Man by Nature. But the Believer's Knowledge is vastly different: He sees the wide and boundless Extent of the Law; how that it reaches the most minute Thought or Motion of the Mind; that it pryes into the inmost Recesses of the Heart, and condemns the least stirring of Sin. This, and a Sight of the Impotency of our Natures, to fulfil the least *Iota* of this broad, extensive Law, is what entitles a Man to the Name of a *Knower* of the Law. Surely the Apostle, who remember'd his own narrow Knowledge of the Law when unregenerate, would never have given the Character of a Knower of the Law to a natural Man: He would never have address'd himself to a Man in a State of Nature, to discourse with him on such a sublime Subject, as the Freedom Believers have from the Law, thro' their Union and Marriage to Christ: This would have been casting his Pearls before Swine indeed. Might not the natural Man (as they always do) have turn'd again and rented him, as it were; have laugh'd at and ridicul'd him for his Discourse. Might not he have said, "What a Pack
 " of silly Fools are these same Apostles? What
 " a foolish, inconsistent Piece of Stuff, have they
 " got by the end? Who knows what they mean
 " by being *married to Christ*? There may have
 " been such a Man as Jesus, for what I know?
 " but to talk of being *married* to him, is such
 " unintelligible Nonsense, that none but mad
 " Enthusiasts would have thought of such a thing."
 Might not this (as it certainly now is) have been the Answer of a natural Man to *Paul's* Discourse on the Marriage Union of Believers? Wherefore the

the Conclusion from the Parenthesis (*I speak to them that know the Law*) that the Apostle thro' the whole Chapter characterises a natural Man, is very groundless; and if they have no better Arguments to support *their natural Exposition* of it (as, I think, it will appear they have not) they will be easily overturn'd.

There is another Exposition of this Parenthesis (*I speak to them, &c.*) and that is by way of Supposition, that the Apostle addresses himself to some *Jews* who were in the Church of *Rome*; *q. d.* I speak to you *Jews* who know the Law, *i. e.* who have all your Life-time studied the Law, and are well acquainted with the Injunctions of Obedience the Law lays on every Man, and the Curses it denounces against the Violaters: You must know that the Law requires perfect Obedience from a Man, so long as he liveth. This Exposition of the Words may, possibly, be true; but the three following Reasons, I think, justly disallow it.

1st, The immediate Coherence of this with the preceeding Chapter seems to shew, that the Apostle keeps on the Discourse with the very same Persons.

2^dy, If these *Jews* to whom the Apostle is suppos'd to direct his Discourse, were not converted, they did not, by all their Acquaintance with the Law, know more, nor so much as a converted *Roman*; and, if converted, they were both on a Level.

3^dy, If the Sentence is spoken to *Jews* unconverted, the Life which is spoken of in *Ver. 1.* must signify a natural Life, which the whole Scope of the Chapter utterly forbids, the Apostle all the while speaking of spiritual Life and Death with respect to the Law. So that, I think, 'tis

very plain, the Apostle still keeps on his Discourse with the very same Persons; he speaks to converted People, be they *Jews* or *Romans*, or both together. It may here be objected, What need then is there for this Parenthesis, if the Apostle still speaks to the same Persons? I answer, that the Apostle, by this Parenthesis, puts that into an Affirmation which he is questioning: *Know ye not, Brethren (for I speak to them that know the Law) i. e.* I am fully perswaded you do know the Law; wherefore I need make no Question about it; you all very well know, &c. there is just such another Expression of Paul's in *Acts xxvii. 27. King Agrippa, believest thou the Prophets? I know that thou believest.* This seems just the same as the Expression in hand; *Know ye not?* I am sure ye know, for I am speaking to such as know the Law: And this sense is further strengthned, if we connect the 1st with the 4th Verse, leaving out the Example of the Man and Wife (which is only brought by way of Illustration, and hinders not the Connection.) The Words thus connected will run after this manner: My Brethren, who, I am perswaded, are spiritually acquainted with the Demands of the Law, you certainly know that the Law rules and has Dominion over a Man, so long as he liveth, *i. e.* so long as he expects Life by his Performance of its Demands, the Law has Power to curse him for the least Violation of it, being well assur'd of this, *Ver. 4. Ye are become dead to the Law, by the Body of Christ, &c. i. e.* seeing you thus know the Law spiritually, ye are become dead to it in your Expectations of Life by your Obedience, and that by the Body of Christ, by your Knowledge of the perfect Righteousness, which Christ in his
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own Body wrought out: You have left off expecting Salvation by the Law, inasmuch as you have seen that you can't, and that Christ has in your stead perfectly fulfill'd the Law. Thus then, the Coherence of the Chapter with the preceding one, in some measure takes away the Notion of a natural Man being characteris'd, inasmuch as it appears, that the Apostle still continues his Discourse to the same Persons, and on the same Subject. We come now in the

3^d Place, To enquire into the Marks and Characters which are given in the Chapter of this pretended natural Man: And this we shall do by some brief Annotations on the whole Chapter, and make Observations to whom the Characters given mostly belong, as we go on.

Let us proceed then from the 4th *Ver.* In the latter part of it he tells them, that the Consequence of their being married to Christ, is, that they should bring forth Fruit to God. He tells them, that the Fruit they now bring forth since their Marriage to Christ, is quite different from their former Fruit; *For* (says he, *Ver. 5.*) *when we were in the Flesh, i. e.* when we were not perceptively married to Christ, *the Motions of Sin, which were by the Law, which the Law discover'd to us, did work in our Members to bring forth Fruit unto Death; i. e.* the Sight of our sinful selves by the Law, put us upon working for Life and Salvation, tho', in reality, it was but bringing forth Fruit unto Death: For had we been never so holy, the Law requir'd us to be more so, and cursed us for our Non-Performance. Hence, by the way, observe what a woful Task-Master the Law is; Let us be never so upright and holy, and go on doing the best we can; yet the Law

requires still more, and damns if we don't go forward: Jam. ii. 10. *If thou offendest in one Point thou art guilty of all*, and Gal. iii. 10. *Cursed is he that continueth not in all things written in the Book of the Law to do them*. The Law will either have all, or else punish eternally; 'tis like the *Egyptians* with *Israel*; they oblig'd them to make the same Number of Bricks when they did, as when they did not gather their Straw: Even so the Law requires every Jot as much from thee, now thou hast lost thy Strength, as it did when thou hadst it.

Ver. 6. *But now we are deliver'd from the Law, that being dead wherein we were held; q. d. now we are married we are deliver'd, and are freed from the Law, with regard to its Curses; we are well assur'd that the Law can never hurt us; tho' we do fall short in our Obedience, we have a perfect Righteousness imputed to us, capable of answering all the Demands of the Law; and being found in that, the Law can do us no Harm: We are deliver'd from it that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit, and not in the oldness of the Letter; i. e. our Service to the Law, since our Marriage-Union,* is out of Obedience and Love to our Husband, our Performances springing from the Love of the Spirit shed abroad in our Hearts: We serve, not as formerly, in the oldness of the Letter, out of a Fear of the Curses of the Law, or out of servile Hopes to obtain Salvation by our lame Performances; but because our Redeemer has effec-*

* By Marriage Union, is here meant, the Perception of our Interest in, and Union with Christ. Because Believers may be said to be united to Christ two ways: (1st.) Really before the Foundation of the World; and (2dly.) Vitally, in time, i. e. perceptively, when they receive Life and Strength from him as a Head of Influence.

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tually sav'd us from eternal Wrath; therefore we serve, therefore we willingly obey.

Now, to whom does a Character of this Nature, viz. of one that serves in the newness of the Spirit, &c. most belong? From what Principles does a natural Man endeavour to obey the Law (for he does but endeavour) I say, what are the natural Man's Motives to do any thing which the Law demands? Is it out of a Love to God or to his Glory? The Apostle Paul tells us not, *Rom. viii. 7. The carnal Mind is Enmity against God: For it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be.* Whatever, therefore, a carnal, natural Person may do, he does all in the *oldness of the Letter*; he does it all out of a Fear of Hell, and in vain Hopes of purchasing Heaven for his Deeds; but the renew'd Person serves in the newness of the Spirit; he serves out of Love to his Redeemer, because he is married to him. Whereas a natural Man has no Notion of Christ, he is all for himself; if he can but do so and so, he thinks he shall do well enough. Here then is one discriminating Distinction between a natural and a renew'd Person; the first serves in the oldness of the Letter; the second, in the newness of the Spirit. From whence I draw my first Argument against the Asserters of a natural Man being characteris'd.

Arg. I. Those that serve or obey the Law in the newness of the Spirit, i. e. out of pure Love to Christ and his Glory, cannot be natural Men, for *they* serve in the oldness of the Letter. The Persons here spoke of are said to serve in the newness of the Spirit, not in the oldness of the Letter: Therefore the Persons here characteris'd cannot be natural Men. But to proceed:

Ver. 7. *What shall we say then, is the Law Sin? God forbid.* This Objection is started to the Assertion in the 5th Ver. concerning the Motions of Sin by the Law. If so, says the Apostle, some will object, that the Law is Sin. *God forbid* (says he;) God forbid that any should think thus of the pure Law of God. Now to answer this Objection, and to defend the Holiness and Purity of the Law, he adds, *Nay, I had not known Sin, but by the Law: For I had not known Lust, except the Law had said, Thou shalt not covet;* q. d. the Law cannot be Sin; for I had not known Sin my self, except the Law had discover'd it. The Force of the Apostle's Argument may be illustrated by this Syllogism. That which discovers, forbids, and strictly condemns Sin, cannot be Sin, nor the Cause of it: But the holy Law of God *does* this in, and to the Conscience of the Sinner: Therefore, it is neither Sin, nor the Cause of it. Now here comes in the Point, does the Apostle by *I*, in this Verse, mean himself, or does he go about to characterise another, *viz.* a natural Person? I think that it seems as plain and as visible as the Sun at Noon, that it is the very same *I* that speaks in the first Verse. But, let us examine and see whether a Person destitute of the Spirit of God knows and sees that the least motion or stirring of Sin, without the formal or outward Transgression of the Law, incurs the Curses which the Law denounces. There is more, vastly more contain'd in this Word *covet*, than the natural Man apprehends: The Word in the Greek *οὐκ ἐπιθυμῇς*, signifies, *thou shalt not desire*: What must we not desire? Not only our Neighbour's House, Wife, Servant, &c. but we must not desire the least Thing to be otherwise than God has fix'd it. The least Uneasiness

as to our Circumstances, either of Soul or Body, is a Breach of the Tenth Commandment: If we covet or desire the State our Neighbour is in, we are guilty of the whole Law; for if *we offend only in one Point*, the rest will all follow.

The *Assembly's Catechism* gives an excellent Definition, both of what the Tenth Commandment requires and forbids.

“ Quest. 80. *What is requir'd in the Tenth Commandment?* ”

“ *Ans.* The Tenth Commandment requireth
“ full Contentment with our own Condition;
“ with a right and charitable Frame of Spirit to-
“ wards our Neighbour, and all that is his.
“ *Heb. xiii. 5. Rom. xii. 15. 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5, 6.*

“ Quest. 81. *What is forbidden in the Tenth Commandment?* ”

“ *Ans.* — All Discontentment with our own
“ Estate, envying or grieving at the good of
“ our Neighbour, with all inordinate Motions
“ and Affections to any thing that is his. *1 Cor. x.*
“ *10. Gal. v. 26. Col. iii. 5.* ”

The natural Man may perhaps see, that in any way to desire what is another's is Sin; but he does not observe, that the least Discontent, the least Wish, that Things and Circumstances were otherwise than they are, is also a Violation of God's holy Law; this, I say, a natural Man does not see; and it is one, nay, the first thing the Apostle tells us the Law discover'd to him, *viz.* that Desire was Sin: *I had not known Lust, except the Law had said, Thou shalt not covet.* A Person that understands by Lust, no more than an eager Desire after another, or another's Property, cannot be said to know Sin by the Law, for he does not see how far the Law extends. Wherefore we conclude, that the Law must, in the Spirit's Hand,
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be open'd and set home to the Sinner, before he can know what Sin really is; and when this is open'd to the Soul, it cannot be suppos'd, that the Person is in a mere natural State, for he must have new Eyes to see and look by the Laws, and the Spirit's Light, how things stand within him.

Ver. 8. *But Sin taking occasion by the Law, wrought in me all manner of Concupiscence: For without the Law Sin was dead:* Here the Apostle tells us, that tho' the Law was not the formal Cause of Sin, yet Sin was an accidental Event of the Law, thro' the Corruption and Depravity of human Nature. *Sin taking occasion by the Law, &c.* i. e. Sin being made apparent and condemn'd by the Law, took occasion to swell it self into all manner of Concupiscence. I saw, *q. d.* in my self, thro' the Law's coming in the Spirit's Hand, Sin daily more and more appearing and shewing it self: *For without the Law Sin was dead;* i. e. either, (1st.) without the Knowledge and due Consideration of the Law Sin is dead comparatively; the inward Motions and Corruptions of the Heart not so much as known to be Sin: Or, (2^{dly}.) Sin is dead with regard to its appearing to condemn the Sinner by his Knowledge of the Law. In these two Senses Sin without the Law is dead: For adds the Apostle,

Ver. 9. *I was alive without the Law once.* This Sentence shews that the Apostle, by the former Expresssion, *I had not known Sin but by the Law, &c.* means that he had not known Sin but by a Knowledge of the vast Extent of the Law's Demands by the Spirit's Discovery. *I was alive once;* i. e. when I liv'd a Pharisee, and had the Law in my Hand (tho' indeed was without the Law, as to any Knowledge that it requir'd exact,

act, perfect Obedience from me.) I contented my self then with a bare external Observation of its Demands, and thence concluded my self safe and happy : I was very lively then in my Trust and Confidence to what I could do, and what I had done, as touching the Righteousness of the Law, and thought I was blameless. *But when the Commandment came, i. e. when the Spirit lead me, by the Spirituality of the Law, to see my own Vileness and Depravity, Incapacity and Impotency to fulfil the Law, then Sin reviv'd.* I saw then such a Mass of Corruption as I had never discover'd before, *Sin reviv'd and I dy'd.* Dying here is oppos'd to Living in the Beginning of the Verse. As he was before the coming of the Commandment, in its true Light and Power, *alive*, in his Hopes of Salvation by his Obedience to it; so now, after it was fully open'd and explain'd to him, then he *dy'd*, he gave up then all Hopes of Salvation, by such an extensive, broad, and cursing Law.

I appeal here to the Experience of every Believer; nay, even to our Adversaries on this Point themselves (if they know any thing of the Nature of a Work of Grace) whether the Experience here set down was not exactly their Case. Were not they, in their Unregeneracy, perfectly *alive* in their Hopes and Expectations of Salvation by their Obedience? Did not they think, that if they perform'd a few Externals, such as Praying, Hearing, Reading, or the like, that all was well; and, that by these means, they could satisfy Divine Justice, and make their Peace with God: But when they were enabled to see their own Vileness and Sinfulness, that Sin mix'd itself with every thing they did, did not they then,

then, with *Paul*, die to all their former Hopes and Confidence? and how was all this effected, if not by the coming of the Commandment? The Spirituality of the Law was by the Spirit open'd to their Understandings, and in that Glass they saw their terrible Deformity and total Incapacity of fulfilling this perfect Law; 'twas by this means, or none, they dy'd to all Hopes of attaining Salvation by their Obedience. And surely, those who know any thing of the Methods of the Holy Spirit with the Sinner, will never gain-say this being the Apostle's, as well as every Believer's Experience. And, if Mr. *Wesley* (who maintains that *Paul* characterises a natural Man in the viith Chapter) when he writ his Hymns, spoke his own Experience, he must by saying so, contradict what part of one of his Hymns sets forth. The Words are these:

*Long have I vainly hop'd and strove
To force my Hardness into Love,
To give thee all thy Laws require,
And labour'd in the purging Fire.
Frail, dark, impure, I still remain,
Nor hope to break my Nature's Chain;
The fond self-emptying Scheme is past,
And lo! constrain'd, I yield at last.*

Hymn pag. 62.

If this was his Experience, and if he will stand to it, I am sure he must contradict it when he says, that the Apostle here characterises a natural Man; for these two Verses just tally with the Apostle in the 9th Verse; the 1st Verse tells us, that he vainly endeavour'd and hop'd to give the Law all its Demands; so did *Paul*, *I was alive once without the Law*: And in the last Part of the second Verse he tells us, the fond Scheme

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was all over, and he was constrain'd to yield that he could not do what before he vainly hop'd and strove to do. And what could blow this Scheme away, if not a Sight that the Law requir'd more than he, with all his Strength and Abilities could accomplish? This also was *Paul's* Case, *but when the Commandment came, Sin reviv'd and I died.* Here then, from what has been observ'd under the 7th, 8th, and 9th Verses, I would fix another Argument against a natural Man being here characteris'd.

Arg. II. Those who are by the Law lead to see their own Vileness, inward Corruption and Depravity, and their Impotency, and total Incapacity to fulfil the Law's Demands, cannot be natural Men: The Person here spoke of is said to do all this: Therefore, this Person cannot be a natural Man.

Ver. 10. *And the Commandment which was ordain'd to Life, I found to be unto Death.* I would make the two following Observations on this Verse.

1st, That the Commandment, which was in the Promulgation of it design'd for Life, *i. e.* by our observing strictly its Commands, Life was to be obtain'd, as the Tenour of the Law runs, *do this and live*; this Commandment, which was thus ordained to Life, the Apostle found to be unto Death; *i. e.* thro' the Weakness of the Flesh, the Law, which would once have given Life by the Observance of its Injunctions, now shew'd itself to be a Law that brought nothing but Death; inasmuch as the Creature, thro' Imperfection, is unable to answer its perfect Requirements. Or the Sense of the Words may be taken thus, which better agrees with the *Greek*

2^{dly},

2dly, The Word *ordain'd* is not in the Greek, neither do I see any great Occasion for it: The Greek text runs thus, καὶ εὗρέθη μοι ἡ ἐντολὴ ἡ εἰς ζωὴν, αὐτὴ εἰς θάνατον, & *mandatum quod inventum est mihi ad vitam idem inventum est ad mortem*: I would read the Words in this manner. And the Commandment which I found unto Life, the same I found unto Death, *i. e.* the Commandment which, before the Spirit set it home in its proper Light, I expected to give me Life by my Obedience to it, I afterwards found unto Death; inasmuch as it shew'd me my great Imperfections and Short-comings, and shew'd me that it cursed every thing not as pure as it self. And this sense, I think, the Apostle confirms by the following Verse, (Ver. 11.) *For Sin, taking occasion by the Commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me; q. d.* thro' my knowledge of the Law Sin appeared to be exceeding sinful, and I saw that I continually deviated from the Law; for the Word ἐξηπάτησέ, which is translated *deceived*, signifies to lead out of the way: And, so the Apostle, thro' his Knowledge of the Law's Extent, saw that Sin every Moment of his Life lead him out of the way, lead him into continual Breaches of the Law, and by this means, Sin by the Law *slew him*; slew all his Hopes of Life and Salvation by it; since he saw by it, that so far from obeying it, he was by Sin's Influence continually violating it.

Ver. 12. *Wherefore the Law is holy, and the Commandment holy, and just, and good*: Here is the Apostle's Conclusion of the matter; *q. d.* since the Law has thus shewn me my Imperfection, and discover'd that in me to be really Sin, which I did not know to be so before, and has
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shewn how incapable I am to fulfil its Injunctions; and at the same time, has condemn'd the least stirring of Sin, I conclude that the Law is holy, and just, and good, or else it would never pry so strictly within, and so absolutely condemn my inward Corruptions.

Ver. 13. *Was then that which is good made Death unto me? God forbid. But Sin, that it might appear to be Sin, working Death in me by that which is good; that Sin by the Commandment might become exceeding sinful.* This Objection the Apostle puts, that he may clear up his Meaning, concerning what he had said in the 10th, 11th, and 12th Verses: He had told them, that the Commandment which was found by him to Life, he had found also to Death; and he had asserted, that the Law for all this was holy, just, and good: *Was then, says he, that which is good made Death unto me?* he answers, *God forbid.* The Law was not made Death unto me, but this is what was Death to me, even Sin shewing itself to be exceeding sinful, thro' my Knowledge of this pure, holy Law of God. It was Sin that condemn'd and slew me, by shewing itself in the Glass of the Law, to be above measure sinful. A Person's being slain thro' the Law shewing and discovering Sin, is just like a Person that is all over Filth, and does not know it; but bring the Man to a bright transparent Glass, and then he discovers what an abominable, nasty Condition he is in. Now no one will say, that the Glass made the Person filthy. Even thus it is with the Law and the Sinner: Sin has made him all over Filth, but he is totally ignorant of it: And when the Law is set before him in a right manner, then he finds what a woful Figure Sin has

has made him. I say, set before him in a *right manner*, because the Law may be set before a Sinner, but not in a right manner; as the Glass might have been set before a Man, with the Back to his Face, and then he would have remain'd, as ignorant as before: So likewise, the Law may be set before the Sinner with the back parts foremost, he may view it externally, but this will not do, an external View of the Law will never discover internal Corruptions; wherefore, when the Law is fully open'd and rightly set before the Sinner, then Sin appears in its blackest Colours, and condemns and kills the Sinner. 'Tis Sin that is made Death, the Law still remaining as at first, holy, just, and good.

Ver. 14. *For we know that the Law is spiritual, &c.* What *we* can possibly be here meant? a Parcel of natural Men? certainly not, for the Apostle tells us, 1 Cor. ii. 14. that *the natural Man receiveth not the Things of the Spirit of God; for they are Foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* The Apostle here totally excludes the natural Man from any Knowledge of the things of the Spirit of God, and that because he is destitute of spiritual Understanding or Discernment. Wherefore it is Believers, and them alone, that can say, *we know that the Law is spiritual*, and the Consequence of this Knowledge of the Law's Spirituality is, as the Apostle adds, *but I am carnal, sold under Sin.* When a Soul is led to see the strict Perfection and Holiness of the Law, he breaks out, *I am carnal*, I am by Nature sinful, vile, and wicked, *sold* (in my carnal Principles) *under Sin.* How! say the *Perfectionists*, can a Person be a true Believer, made free by Christ
Jesus

Jesus, and yet be carnal, *sold* under Sin? I answer, very easily. And it is for want of a due Knowledge wherein the Freedom from Sin consists, that starts the Objection. To be free from Sin, is to have a Knowledge and Perception that the Lord Jesus, by his Blood and Sacrifice, has taken away the Curse which Sin brings with it, and that in particular for thy Soul, whoever thou art, that art free from Sin. But the Apostle explains his being *sold under Sin*, by manifesting that he was not *perfect*, and that he had still one Principle in him, that continually induc'd him to that which is evil.

Ver. 15. *For that which I do, I allow not*: Observe here the Opposition of the two Principles; that which I, thro' the Carnality of the old Man do, that I with the new Man allow not, *For what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I*. Now who will say, that the natural Man does what he allows not, or what he hates, when the Scripture says, *he drinketh Iniquity like Water*, Job xv. 16. and how is that, but with Pleasure, with Delight, with Approbation? And it must be thus, because the natural Man has no Principle but what allows of all he does.

Ver. 16. *If then I do that which I would not, I consent to the Law that it is good*. This Verse is a Conclusion from the two preceeding ones; for, says he, if I have a Principle that leads me to detest that which is Sin, which my old carnal Principles lead me to commit, I do then consent to the Law, I coincide with it against my sinful Actions, I acknowledge my self to be carnal, as to Nature's Principles, and the Law to be good. This then produces another Argument

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against

against the Notion of a natural Man being here signify'd.

Arg. III. Whoever finds a Principle in him that detests and abhors Sin, and loves the Law of God on account of its Purity; or, in the Apostle's Words, that finds the *Spirit lusting against the Flesh*, &c. (Gal. v. 17.) such a one cannot be a mere natural Person: But the Person here is said to hate and disallow what he does, and to love and approve of the Law in its Spirituality: Therefore, the Person here characteris'd cannot be a natural Man.

Ver. 17. Now then, it is no more I that do it, but Sin that dwelleth in me. What an Heap of Inconsistencies must be in this Chapter, If a natural Man were speaking: *I do* and *I do not*, is the whole Discourse for six or seven Verses. Would not any one think me very foolish and nonsensical were I to say, *I do write, only I do not*, tho' our *Perfectionists* are as foolish in their Arguments as such Talk. I was discoursing once with one of them upon Perfection, and he own'd, that Sin would never be totally rooted out till Death, but said, that it might be so kept down as not to stir. Upon this I ask'd, what Sin * essentially was: He answer'd (I suppose, as he thought like a Scholar) that Sin was Desire. To this I answer'd, that if Sin was Desire, it must be always active, for a Desire is certainly an Act put forth: From whence it will follow, that Sin can never be so kept down, but what it will stir. This he would not grant, tho' before he own'd that Sin was Desire. Who sees not the Absurdi-

* The Term *essential* may not be so proper, but I knew it would bring him to an Inconsistency.

ty, that Sin, tho' its Essence be Desire, yet may exist, or be in a Person, where there is not this Desire, or this acting of Sin?

The Notion in this Discourse of Sin being a Desire, arises from the Apostle's Words *ex eo concupiscis*, thou shalt not covet, or lust, or desire. Such a Desire then, as the Law forbids, is Sin; for *Sin is the Transgression of the Law*. But, however, observe in this 17th Verse, the Apostle says, *it is no more I but Sin*, &c. here is a flat Contradiction to what had been said before (if a natural Man be characteris'd) he had said before, *that which I do I allow not*, and here he says, *it is no more I that do it*. How must we reconcile this? Never by their Scheme: For if a natural Man be here represented, then a natural Person, with his carnal, sinful Principles, at one and the same time, may hate and love one and the same thing. Now it is plain, that a natural Man loves Sin entirely, how then can he be said to hate it, as the Person here is? except, as I said before, a Man may hate and love one and the same thing, at one and the same time, with one and the same Principle, which is utterly impossible. And I know no Principle that the natural Man has but vicious ones. But here is the thing, *Paul* had now other Principles than he had in a natural State, and these were what disallow'd all the natural Man, the carnal Principles did.

Ver. 18. *For I know that in me (that is, in Flesh) dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not*. Here is another Contradiction (according to their way) the Apostle, in the 15th Verse, tells us, he hated the Sin he committed;

this was certainly a good thing to hate Sin ; but here he says, no good thing dwelt in him : But observe how carefully he interprets *in me (that is, in my Flesh)* it was in his Flesh, in his carnal Principles, that no good thing dwelt, for 'tis the *Flesh lusteth against the Spirit*, Gal. v. 17. Now can a carnal, natural Man come off with this Reserve, that it is in his Flesh and not in his Mind Sin dwells? No, the natural Man is all Flesh, *i. e.* he has nothing in him but sinful, carnal Principles, and *they that are in the Flesh cannot please God. To will is present, but how to perform I find not.* Here is the grand Difference between a natural and a renewed Person ; the first, while in that State, finds neither Will nor Power to perform that which is good ; the latter continually finds a Will, but oftentimes wants Power.

The 19th and 20th Verses entirely agree with the 15th and 17th Verses ; *Ver. 19. For the good that I would, I do not ; but the Evil I would not that do I.* *Ver. 15. For that which I do, I allow not ; for what I would, that do I not ; but what I hate, that do I.* Here we see that the Apostle continually harmonises in his Declarations of what he is by Nature, and what by Grace : By Nature he loves and cherishes Sin ; by Grace he detests and abhors it. Observe now the 20th and 17th Verse ; 20th, *Now, if I do, that I would not, it is no more I, but Sin that dwelleth in me.* *Ver. 17. Now, then it is no more I, but Sin that dwelleth in me.* In both Places he carefully distinguishes between his gracious and natural Principles : With the first, he loves the Law and abhors Sin ; with the other he loves Sin and hates the Law.

Ver.

Ver. 21. *I find then a Law that when I would do good, evil is present with me.* Here is the grand Conclusion, *I find then, &c.* After all, *q.d.* this is what I assert, *I find a Law, a Principle in me as impulsive as a Law, that when I would do good, evil is present, &c.* ἐμοὶ τὸ κακὸν παρέρχεται, evil lies near me, it sticks close to me, it presents itself whenever I will that which is good.

Ver. 22. *For I delight in the Law of God after the inward Man.* Now, can a natural Man delight in the Law of God after the inward Man? perhaps it may be answer'd; Yes, he may delight in it notionally and speculatively.

Ans. I really don't rightly understand what it is to delight in the Law of God *notionally* and *speculatively*; but I put the Objection, because I have read a Letter, wherein the Person was arguing against this viith of the *Romans* being the Experience of a Believer, and when he came to this 22d Verse, *I delight, &c.* he said it was very possible so to do; nay, he knew it by Experience, for he himself delighted in the Law of God, long before he was effectually wrought upon by the Spirit. I wish this Person was ever effectually wrought upon; I am sure the present way he is got in, is no Proof that he has been. But, however, the Apostle cannot be talking of any Delight the natural Man can take in the Law of God, and that for these two Reasons:

1st, Because this Delight in the Law after the inward Man, is directly oppos'd to that Principle, which presented Sin, whenever the Apostle will'd that which was good.

2^{dly}, Because the inward Man is for the most Part in Scripture made use of to signify the new Creature, which every Believer has in his Soul at

the Time of Regeneration: Thus, *Eph. iii. 16. Strengthen you with all might in the inner Man:* And *2 Cor. iv. 16. The inward Man is renewed Day by Day:* Thus also David delighted to do the Will of God, because his Law was within his Heart.

Ver. 23. *But I see another Law in my Members warring against the Law in my Mind, and bringing me into Captivity to the Law of Sin which is in my Members.* A late Annotator takes Notice that the Apostle in this Chapter speaks of four Laws, which are continually at Variance, two on one side, and two on the other. (1.) The Law of God and the Law of the Mind. (2.) The Law of Sin and the Law of the Members. By the Law of God, he understands his Word: By the Law of the Mind, Grace in the Heart: By the Law of the Members, carnal Lust and Concupiscence; and by the Law of Sin, the corrupt Principles by which Sin governs. Thus far he. Now after the Apostle had thus largely spoke of the remainder of indwelling Corruption, he cries out,

Ver. 24. *Oh! wretched Man that I am, who shall deliver me from the Body of this Death.* Whose Language can this be, the natural or the spiritual Man's; the Regenerate or the Unregenerate? Our daily Experience tells us. Whoever hears a natural Man complaining of the Body of Sin? of his indwelling Corruption? of the Plague of his naughty sinful Heart? None I am certain. The Language of the natural Man is, *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.* Let us now take our fill of Pleasure, let us, while we do live, enjoy our selves: Death will presently overtake us, and then we shall have done with
all

all our Enjoyments, and therefore, let us take our full Swing in Iniquity, we shall be stopp'd soon enough; let us not then impede our selves. This is the natural Man's Language, and not who shall deliver me, or help me to get rid of this Body of Death. But however, Sin was the Burden and Trouble of the Apostle, and is so of all true Believers; they groan under the Dominion and Power of indwelling Corruption: But here's the Happiness and Comfort of all; the Believer knows where his Deliverance lies, he knows he has one that is mighty, and able to save to the utmost.

Ver. 25. *I thank God, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord, &c.* This (as I apprehend) means thus much: The Apostle triumph'd and gloried in the Lord Jesus, who had been his Deliverer from the Curse of Sin, and would, thro' Almighty Power, be his Deliverer from all indwelling Corruption, and that when Mortality shall have put on Immortality; when the vile Body in which the Apostle then dwelt, should be made like Christ's glorious Body, incorruptible and sinless: This was what made the Apostle long to be dissolv'd, and to be with Christ, which he said was far better. Here then I would fix my 4th and last Argument against their natural Exposition of this Chapter.

Arg. IV. Whoever is troubled with the Weight of indwelling Corruption, that loaths and detests himself because of Sin, and that can thank God for Christ Jesus, whom he has seen has deliver'd him from the Curse of Sin; and to whom he can by Faith look up, as one who will at last deliver him from all Sin whatever. Such a one cannot be a natural Man: But the Person here

characteris'd is said to do all this; therefore, the Person here characteris'd is not a natural Man.

The Apostle ends this Chapter, as I think, with an indisputable Manifestation, that he had been speaking all along of himself: *So then, with the Mind I my self serve the Law of God; but with the Flesh the Law of Sin.* Observe the Apostle does not only put an *I*, to signify his own Person, but plainly *I my self*, *I*, the very same identical *Paul* who now write to you, *with the Mind serve the Law of God, but with the Flesh, &c.* q. d. it is really I who have had (thro' Mercy) a Work of Grace wrought in my Heart, that have been here writing my own Experience to you, that have been shewing you how to make the Distinction between your gracious and carnal Principles; 'tis I, the very same who now conclude (as I find Sin has still a Dwelling in me) that with the Mind I serve the Law of God, but with the Flesh I still serve the Law of Sin. And then he goes on with the Thread of Discourse in the viiith Chapter; *There is therefore, now no Condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit.*

There is therefore now, &c. This Conclusion, I apprehend, has reference to, or is brought from the 4th and 5th Verses of the viiith Chapter, which speak concerning Believers being free from the Law, by being married to Christ: From which Verses the whole Discourse in the viiith Chapter, is a Digression to answer the Objection concerning the Law's being Sin, tho' the Digression is very excellent, and brings in the Words of the viiith Chapter vastly more bright and glorious;

glorious; *q. d.* my Brethren, now you are married to Christ, now you have seen your Relation to him, and have laid all the Hopes of your Salvation on what he has done for you, there is now no Condemnation for you; neither Law nor Justice has any thing against you, tho' you have still the Remainders of Corruption (as I have been here shewing) warring and fighting against your inward Man; whatever it does, it shall not condemn you, for in him you are entirely safe.

Thus then, by making a few Annotations naturally arising from the Words in this viith Chapter, we have plainly shewn the Absurdity of the Notion of a natural Man being characteris'd, and that in the way at first propos'd, by observing to whom the Epistle is directed, *viz.* to Believers in Christ.

2dly, By observing the natural and genuine Coherence of the viith with the preceding Chapter, the Subject and Thread of Discourse witnessing against a natural Man being introduc'd.

3dly, We have enquir'd into the Marks and Characters given of this pretended natural Man, and, I think, we have found and prov'd that they don't at all belong to him, but to one that has truly tasted that the Lord is gracious. And I think, if any one will take the Pains duly to consider these Things, they will not so easily give into the ignorant Exposition of the Perfectionists on this Chapter. But this Exhortation is quite needless to the People we have to do with, for as they are Opponents to the Truths of the Gospel, so they are resolv'd ever to continue so: For it is a Maxim with them not to trouble their Heads with Meditation and due Consideration of Things.

Things. But, alas, what signifies talking, Idleness is quite agreeable to the Perfection-Doctrine; whoever are perfect, they have no need at all of either Meditation or Reading. There is a Sentence in *Seneca*, which an Author more noted amongst some People for his Learning and Skill in the Tongues, than true Knowledge of the Scripture, has in a Pamphlet of his quoted, and very excellently translated. The Sentence is as follows:

Puto multos potuisse ad Sapientiam pervenire, nisi putassent se pervenisse.

Thus english'd.

“ I cannot help thinking, it might be possible, for many in this Day, to make large Accessions to their present Stock of Knowledge, were they not so unhappy as to preclude themselves by a fond Conceit, that they are already got to Perfection.”

I believe the Author of this Translation had no Intelligence of the *Perfectionists*; but the Sentence of *Seneca*, and his Translation in particular, is very much to the present Purpose. But what (say the *Perfectionists*) should the Children of God contend and strive for, but Love? I answer, for nothing at all, but the eternal, sovereign, and distinguishing Love of God manifested to their Souls: And wherever this true Love of God is shed abroad in the Heart, there will be a constant Zealousness for the Truth as it is in Jesus; they will ever be ready to contend earnestly against every Gainsayer, for the Faith once deliver'd to the Saints, Jude 3. It is impossible for a true Believer,

Believer, with Patience to hear the Doctrines of the Gospel despis'd and trampled under Foot; for he knows they are as dear to his Master as his Blood; he must and will, with the Apostle, withstand Antichrist to the Face, not *giving place by Subjection, so much as for an Hour, Gal. ii. 5.* I heard a *Perfectionist* once say, that he never came into the Company of a Predestinarian, but he began on the Doctrine. To this I did not then, but now answer, that it is quite probable, and it ever will be so; for he that is a true Believer, and what he calls a Predestinarian, if he be experimentally so, the Truths of the Gospel which he professes, will ever by him be introduc'd, not as they are speculative things, but as they have been of substantial Comfort and Delight to their Souls: And, their not contending for their Doctrines, to me is a substantial Argument, that they neither do, nor can take the least Comfort in them; if they did, sure they would be glad to communicate it; and if they think they tend to glorify and honour God, why don't they contend and strive against Antichrist: But these People seem very easy and calm, let whatever Side of the Question be uppermost. But, why does the true Predestinarian contend for the sovereign, free, discriminating Grace and Favour of God? but because he sees himself a vile, wicked Sinner, and that nothing in him could move Jehovah to set his Love upon him; and while he sees others, on an equal Level with himself, pursuing their Lusts and Pleasures, and filling up the Measure of their Iniquity, he is led to cry out, Oh! adorable, free, and discriminating Grace, that I should be secur'd, and others left.

But

But again, why does he contend for efficacious, almighty Grace? But because he knows, that he was an harden'd, obstinate Wretch, and that nothing short of an almighty Hand, could have conquer'd his stubborn and rebellious Heart. Blessed be his Name, saith the Soul, that I, an impenitent, harden'd Sinner, was made willing in the Day of his Power. I was following with Greediness my Lusts and Pleasures, and was totally ignorant of Christ, and the way of Salvation; but, by Almighty Grace, I was sweetly drawn to the Lord, as in Christ Jesus, a God forgiving Iniquities, Transgressions, and Sins. Or, why does he contend for the Immutability of God's Love to his People? but because the Honour of his immutable God is at stake; and he knows that all his solid and substantial Comfort must vanish, if his God may change or alter in his Love towards him. Alas, 'tis the Immutability of God's Love, that upholds the true Believer, when nothing else will: Whatever fails, he knows his God cannot nor will not, in all his Difficulties and Troubles: He can triumph (thro' the Spirit) in the Words of the Prophet *Habbakkuk*, *Hab. iii. 17, 18. Although the Fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall Fruit be in the Vines, the Labour of the Olive shall fail, and the Field shall yield no Meat, the Flock shall be cut off from the Fold, and there shall be no Herd in the Stalls, yet will I joy in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my Salvation.*

This is the true Believer's Language, and this is the substantial Comfort of those they call Predestinarian, when the immediate Perception of God's Love to their Souls is gone, they can still trust and rely on this immutable, covenant-keeping

keeping God. The Lord grant that I may always remain such a Predestinarian: I have been reproach'd with the Name; but, as I trust, I have not the Name only, without something of the Substance, I am content. Many may talk and dispute for these Doctrines, who know nothing of the Power and Comfort of them: But the true Believer, as these and other great Truths are the matter of his Experience and Consolation, they must, and will continually be discoursing of them: *If the Foundations* (says the Psalmist) *be destroy'd, what can the Righteous do?* Psal. xi. 3. What can they do? even nothing at all: If they lose the Doctrines of the Gospel, they lose the Stay, Support, and Comfort of their Souls.

Let not, therefore, the Perfectionist wonder any longer, that the Predestinarians are always for advancing their Doctrines, since they are to them, the Marrow, (I had almost said) the Essence of Christianity.

The Perfectionists, when we speak of the Doctrines, presently cry out, Come, come, let us lay aside these Disputes, and talk of the Work of Grace on our Souls. Why, they talk in this ignorantly; it is impossible with us, to separate our Experiences from the Doctrines: And if they will talk of Experience, they must talk in the manner above-mention'd, *viz.* of Grace being sovereign, discriminating, efficacious, and immutable; what wonderful Pleasure, and astonishing Delight they have taken, in seeing the discriminating Goodness of God in the Choice of their Persons from Eternity; how they have been led to adore the Power of the Holy Spirit, in reaching and subduing their naughty Hearts, and bringing them to a Knowledge of the Righteousness of Christ

Christ wrought out for them, in Pursuance to the immutable and everlasting Covenant between the Father and the Son, on account of their Persons. In this manner (if they talk with a Predestinarian) must they discourse, or else their Experience will not be for mutual Comfort and Establishment.

But, however, this is a little from the present purpose. We are still on our first Head. We have found none in the Old Testament perfect; nor hitherto none in the New. *Paul* we have found imperfect, and, I think, he always remained so, whilst in this World. Hold! (say the Perfectionists) he was perfect, when he writ those Words to *Timothy* (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.) *I have fought a good Fight, I have finish'd my Course, I have kept the Faith, henceforth, &c.* Here is not one Word of Perfection, that I see. Nay, in the Epistle to the *Ephesians*, which was writ just about the same time with this, he puts himself in amongst the rest, and says, *we wrestle not against Flesh and Blood; but against Principalities and Powers, against the Rulers of the Darkness of this World, against spiritual Wickedness in high Places*, Eph. vi. 12. Wherefore the Fight which the Apostle says he had fought, does not imply that he had got rid of his spiritual Enemies, but that his open contending for the Truth, and preaching of the Gospel, was in all probability at an end; for 'tis certain *Paul* was not sure, that the Lord would not deliver him from the Hands of *Nero*, to preach his Truths again; and it is much question'd, whether this Epistle was writ the first, or the second Time of his being at *Rome*: There are Arguments on both Sides: Dr. *Hammond* supposes it was written the first Time: Mr. *Poole* thinks

thinks the second: But let that be which way it will, there is no ground to suppose him absolutely perfect; and from the Epistles which he writ after this, it is plain he was not. The Epistles to the *Philippians*, *Colossians*, and *Philemon*, are those supposed to be writ after this. The Reasons for it are these: It is observable in the ivth Chap. of the 2d to *Timothy*, that he is desir'd to come to *Rome*, and in the 21st Ver. to come before Winter: And, that he did come, is evident, by his Name being join'd to all these Epistles, and their being all dated from *Rome*. Now, in these three Epistles *Paul* expresseth what intimates his Imperfection: But it does not signify multiplying Words on this Head to prove it; for in the *Philippians*, Chap. xiii Ver. 12. he plainly tells us, he had not attain'd Perfection: Wherefore, this makes void and null the Sense they would have put on this Text in this 2d to *Timothy*; if the one shews he had not attain'd to Perfection, the other, which was writ before it, cannot signify he had.

One thing is observable in our Perfectionists; when they see they can't find *Paul* perfect in his Life-time, they will shuffle it (as they pretend) by the Text in *Timothy*, to his Death. It seems very strange, that *Paul* should stay so long a time for his Perfection and they so short. *Paul* was in the 35th Year after his Conversion, when he died: Whereas some of the Perfectionists are arriv'd to it (as they say) in less than a 35th part of the time. *Paul*, I think, had as great need of it, if not more than any of them. But, I think, we have prov'd that he never attain'd it: Neither do we read, that any of the Churches to which he wrote had. The *Corinthians* had been so far from it, that
some

some of them had been drunk at the Lord's Table, 1 Cor. xi. 21. and all of them in one way or other shew'd themselves imperfect; had they been perfect, the Exhortations and Injunctions which are used in all the Epistles, would have been entirely useless. Let us just observe what St. *John* in his first Epist. Chap. i. Ver. 8. says of himself, as of all others, *if we say we have no Sin, we deceive our selves, and the Truth is not in us.* What Truth is not in us? I answer, (1st.) Either Truth respecting the Assertion; we lie if we say so: Or (2^{dly}.) The Truth of Grace is not in us: And this last Sense is certainly a very good one. For he that talks of having no Sin in him, is very much to be suspected of having nothing else in him: However, he must be set down as one that knows little of his own Heart.

Well, but our Perfectionists say, that having no Sin, means, as in the 10th Verse, having not sinned. This is surely the strangest way of interpreting Scripture, that ever was heard of, and is not worth any considerate Person's notice: And 'tis strange, such a learned Man as Mr. *Wesley*, amongst the rest, should suffer himself to be led by an espoused Opinion, to overthrow all sense and Grammar: He must see, that the *have* in the 8th Verse, is a Verb in the Indicative Mood Present Tense, and that the *have* in the 10th Verse, is a Sign of the Preterperfect Tense: And surely they must be the greatest Bigots that will swallow down such an Absurdity. I am certain, was a poor Under-graduate at College to translate *αμαρτιαν εν εχομεν, non peccavimus*; he would say he was a Blockhead, and deserv'd to be rusticated, and sent from College to learn his Accidence

dence again; but so it is, *A. B.* or *M. A.* are all one: When an Opinion is espous'd, it must be maintain'd, maugre Scripture, Sense, or Reason.

We shall now proceed to the second Thing propos'd: We have finish'd the first, and have found both Old and New Testament Saints *imperfect*. Let us now,

II. Enquire into some of the Promises which are certainly constituted for the Believer's Comfort and Establishment, and see whether they favour of this Doctrine.

All the Promises in general (as Mr. *Leigh* expresses himself) are the Grounds of our Hope, the Objects of our Faith, and the Rule of Prayer.

A Promise, what is it in itself? But as one well observes, * "A Declaration of those future Blessings God has to bestow upon us, to the end that Consolation may be receiv'd from it, and our Confidence on God may be establish'd."

Or, as Dr. *Owen* on the Saints Perseverance, speaking of the Promises, thus defines them,

"They are a Manifestation of the Mind and Will of God, tending and exhibiting the Lord Jesus Christ, from the Love of the Father, unto the Souls of Believers." The Promises are glorious things indeed! They are absolute and unconditional, free and unmerited, sure and everlasting; for, in Christ, all the Promises

are *Yea and Amen*. But, however, we shall examine a few of the Promises under the two following Particulars.

* *Promissio Dei est Denunciatio futurorum bonorum nobis dandorum, ut ex ea Consolationem habeamus, & Fides nostra in Deum confirmetur. Polanus.*

1st, Those that respect Perseverance. And,
 2^{dly}, Those that respect Growth and Increase
 of Grace.

1st, Of Perseverance: And of this kind there
 is a very glorious one in *Dent. xxxi. 8.* *He will
 be with thee, he will not fail thee nor forsake
 thee; fear not, neither be dismay'd.* Words can-
 not be fuller of Comfort, and yet here is not one
 single Word like Perfection. Yes, say the Per-
 fectionists, *he will not forsake thee*: This implies
 that he will continually be with them. 'Tis true,
 the Words do emply, that the Lord would con-
 tinually be with *Joshua* (to whom this Promise
 was first made) in his going before the *Israelites*:
 But when it is taken as a spiritual Promise to the
 Believer, the Apostle to the *Hebrews* explains it
 in another Light; and if our Perfectionists will
 take his Sense of the Promise, it is, that the
 Lord will never totally or finally fail his People,
Heb. xiii. 5. *Let your Conversation be without
 Covetousness; and be content with such things as
 ye have; for he has said, I will never leave thee,
 nor forsake thee;* q. d. Let what will be your Con-
 dition in Soul or Body, be content, don't grum-
 ble, or fret, for he has surely said, *I will never
 leave thee nor forsake thee*: Perhaps he may at
 times hide his Face, and leave you in the dark,
 both in outward an inward Circumstances; but
 don't murmur or repine; for he will never to-
 tally leave you. And in the 8th Verse of this
 Chapter, the Apostle adds, *Jesus Christ the same
 Yesterday, to-day, and for ever.* Here is the
 Sum and Substance of all; the Immutability and
 Stedfastness of God's Love in the Lord Jesus.
 There is another glorious Promise: *Isai. liv. 10.*
*For the Mountains shall depart, and the Hills be
 remov'd;*

remov'd; but my Kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the Covenant of my Peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath Mercy on thee. Here is a Promise, sufficient (thro' the Spirit's Assistance) to carry a Person thro' all the Difficulties, Trials, and Temptations; were there ten times more than there are in this Life: But here is no Word that might lead us to think that we shall be totally excluded from Troubles; for if we were, we should have no need of any Comfort against them. It is inexpressible Joy to a poor Soul, when under Trials, Temptations, and the Buffettings of Satan, to hear these Words sounded by the Spirit in his Ears, *My Kindness shall not depart from thee.* Oh! says the poor Soul, what then need I fear, if thou wilt still and everlastingly love me, O my God and Redeemer! I shall, under a sense of that, count the present Trials but light momentary Afflictions, since thou say'st thou wilt ever love me; and that all my Troubles shall work out a far more exceeding, yea an eternal Weight of Glory; do with me as seemeth good in thy Eyes, art thou my Portion and my God, all is well, and I am happy. These are the Comforts of a poor troubled Soul; and, I'll venture to say, were we not imperfect, and saw our own Weakness and Helplessness in our selves, the Promises of Perseverance, I mean, of the Lord, the Spirit enabling us to hold out to the end, would be of little or no use. 'Tis a Sight of our own Impotency, that leads us to serve the Lord, adore his Power and bless him for that Strength, he has promis'd shall appear in our Wants and Necessities. But again, see to this Purpose, *Amos ix. 15. I will plant them upon their Land, and they shall no more be pull'd up out of their*

Land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God. And again, *Psal. lxxxix. 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33.* where the Lord promises, that all the Children of the Covenant, all his Elect, all the spiritual Seed of *David*, shall inevitably arrive to Glory and Happiness ~~hereafter~~ hereafter; and tho', as it is hinted in the 31st Verse, they may provoke their Maker and their Father, by breaking his Statutes and Commandments, and by that means, incur his fatherly Chastisements; *Nevertheless* (says our gracious God, Ver. 33.) *my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my Faithfulness to fail:* And in the 36th Verse, 'tis added, *his Seed shall endure for ever:* All the Seed of our spiritual *Solomon*, of our glorious High Priest the Lord Jesus Christ, shall endure, and abide with their God for ever and ever.

'Tis needless to quote any more Promises concerning Perseverance; for all the Perfectionists I ever heard of, or talk'd with, disallow the Doctrine. Poor Creatures, after all their Perfection-Attainments, they may miscarry, and fall short of the promis'd Possession; *i. e.* if they disbelieve final Perseverance. They pretend to attain a most glorious State indeed, I think, but one single Degree off Heaven; the Nature of which, Mr. *Wesley* has laid down, and set forth in the Preface to the last Book of Hymns he put out. I shall pen them down now exactly in his own Words, in which the Reader will see, that I stated at the beginning of this Book, the Doctrine of Perfection very right; I did it then only from Conversation with the Perfectionists, but since, having read Mr. *Wesley's* Description of it, I find it just agrees with mine, *viz.* that there are two States of it, a Power over Sin, and a total

total Freedom from it: These two Sorts, or States, the Reader will immediately find in what I shall now quote from the Preface, *pag. 6. §. 7.* “ The
 “ Son hath made them free, who are thus born
 “ of God, from that great Root of Sin and
 “ Bitterness, Pride. They feel, that all their Suf-
 “ ficiency is of God; that it is he alone who is
 “ in all their Thoughts; and worketh in them both
 “ to will and to do, of his good Pleasure; they
 “ feel, that it is not they who speak, but the Spirit
 “ of their Father, that speaks in them, He doth
 “ the Works. So that God is to them all in all,
 “ and they are nothing in his Sight. They are
 “ freed from self-Will, as desiring nothing, no,
 “ not for one Moment (for perfect Love casteth out
 “ Desire) but the holy and perfect Will of God;
 “ not Supplies in Want; not Ease in Pain; not
 “ Life, or Death, or any other Creature; but
 “ continually crying in their inmost Souls, *Fa-*
 “ *ther, thy Will be done:* They are freed from
 “ evil Thoughts, so that they cannot enter into
 “ them; no not for one Instant. Aforetime,
 “ when an evil Thought came in, they look’d
 “ up, and it vanish’d away; but now it does
 “ not come in, there being no room for this, in
 “ a Soul which is full of God: They are freed from
 “ Wandrings in Prayer, whensoever they pour out
 “ their Hearts in a more immediate manner before
 “ God; they have no Thought of any thing past, or
 “ absent, or to come, but of God alone; to whom
 “ their whole Souls flow in one even Stream, and in
 “ whom they are swallowed up. In times past,
 “ they had wandering Thoughts darted in, which
 “ yet fled away like Smoke; but now, that
 “ Smoke does not rise at all, but they continu-
 “ ally see him who is invifible. They are freed
 “ from all Darknefs, having no Fear, no Doubt,

“ either as to their State in general, or as to any
 “ particular Action : For their Eye being single,
 “ their whole Body is full of Light. Whatso-
 “ ever is needful they are taught of God. They
 “ have an Unction from the holy one, which
 “ abideth in them, and teacheth them every
 “ Hour what they shall do, and what they shall
 “ speak. Nor have they, therefore, any need
 “ to reason concerning it ; for they see the way
 “ straight before them. The Lamb is their
 “ Light, and they simply follow him, whither-
 “ soever he goeth. Hence, also, they are in
 “ one Sense, free from Temptations ; for tho’
 “ numberless Temptations fly about them, yet
 “ they wound them not, they trouble them not,
 “ they have no Place in them. At all times
 “ their Soul is even and calm ; their Heart is
 “ stedfast and immoveable, their Peace flowing
 “ as a River, passeth all Understanding, and
 “ they rejoice with Joy unspeakable and full of
 “ Glory : For, they are seal’d with the Spirit
 “ unto the Day of Redemption ; having the
 “ Witness in themselves, that there is laid up
 “ for them a Crown of Righteousness, which
 “ the Lord shall give them in that Day : And,
 “ being fully perswaded, thro’ the Holy Ghost,
 “ that neither Life, nor Death, nor things pre-
 “ sent, nor things to come, nor Height, nor
 “ Depth, nor any other Creature, shall be able
 “ to separate them from the Love of God, which
 “ is in Christ Jesus, their Lord”. This is Per-
 “ fection with a witness, a Body would think the
 “ Person was really got into Heaven, but for one
 “ or two small Sentences.

Indeed I never heard any Person absolutely assert
 in plain Words, that they might fall from this
 Perfection ; but I have heard it from their own
 Mouths

Mouths, that they do not believe the Doctrine of final Perseverance. But, by the way, no living Man sometimes can know, by some of their Talk, what they do believe. We shall now observe some Promises,

2dly, Made concerning Growth and Increase in Grace: See *Matt. xiii. 12. Whosoever hath, to to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance.* What we have, is here promis'd to be augmented, to an Abundance; but nothing mention'd of a total Deprivation of Sin. And again, *Job xvii. 8. The Righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean Hands shall be stronger and stronger.* Here is a further Promise, that, thro' Grace, our Corruptions and Satan's Temptations shall not finally lead us away; but that as our Day is, our Strength shall be also; but nothing to make us believe we shall have no Weaknesses. There is also another Promise full on this Topic, *Hos. xiv. 4, 5, 6, 7. I will heal their Backslidings, and love them freely: For mine Anger is turned away from him. I will be as the Dew unto Israel: He shall grow as the Lilly, and cast forth his Root as Lebanon; his Branches shall spread, and his Beauty shall be as the Olive-Tree, and his Smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his Shadow, shall return; they shall revive as the Corn, and grow as the Vine: The Scent thereof shall be as the Wine of Lebanon.* Here are glorious things spoken of those who are led to the Lord Jesus for Life and Salvation; but I see nothing that tends to promote our Belief of absolute*

E 4

inherent

* Note, the Perfectionists entirely disown, that they expect an *absolute* Perfection: For *absolute*, say they, means, that which can have no Addition to it, nor Diminution from it. This is a good Definition. But, I think, as we are

sinful

Inherent Perfection. Our Fruits, thro' the Lord Jesus, being perfum'd with his Righteousness and Attonement, are as the Scent of the Wine of *Lebanon*, and are grateful and pleasing in the Eyes of our heavenly Father; but as they come from us they are imperfect.

There is that glorious Promise which was made to *Paul*, after his great Revelation, when the Messenger of Satan was sent to buffet him, is a very satisfying one, when the Believer is troubled with indwelling Corruptions, *My Grace is sufficient for thee*, 2 Cor. xii. 9. Here is nothing said like this: I will give thee so much Grace, as thou shalt be rid of all these thy Temptations and Troubles. Nor was it with *Paul*, as with those Mr. *Wesley* talks of, in his Preface I have before quoted, who only look'd up when an evil Thought came, and it presently vanish'd: *Paul* had look'd up thrice, but yet we don't hear that the Thorn was taken away; all the Answer that was given was, *My Grace is sufficient, &c.* He was told, that God had a Sufficiency of Grace treasur'd up to satisfy *all* his Wants and Necessities, and this is what will calm and still the afflicted Soul under his Troubles: Lord, says he, if thou promisest thy Grace to be sufficient for me; hast thou Grace enough for all my Wants, and dost thou tell me, thou hast enough for *me* in particular? Lord, I am satisfy'd, if thou wilt strengthen me with all sufficient Grace, nothing then can finally overcome me; for thy Grace, like thy self is omnipotent. But then let us observe what follows the Words; *for my Strength is* sinful Creatures, when we have got rid of all Sin whatever, we may justly be said to be absolutely perfect, *i. e.* absolutely, entirely, wholly free from Sin; which is what we mean by being perfect.

made perfect in Weakness. Whence note, that we must be weak in our selves, and know it also, before the Sufficiency in Christ Jesus can be of any Service to us. It is not the Grace that is given which is sufficient, but *my* Grace, saith the Text, *i. e.* my Perfection of Grace, which is treasur'd up in Christ, is sufficient, I know (as tho' the Lord had said) that nothing which thou receivest, can be enough to withstand all thy Temptations and spiritual Adversaries; but remember, I have enough in store for thee; and when thou art weak, and feest thou canst not help thy self, tho' thou *hast* receiv'd a great Measure of Grace; then mine, that which I have still in Christ, shall be efficacious; 'tis then I will shew my Grace to be perfect in thy Weakness.

Again, *Psal. lxxxiv. 11.* is a full Promise for Growth and Encrease in all Grace: *He will give Grace and Glory, and no good thing will be withhold from them that walk uprightly:* The Lord has promis'd Grace here, and Glory hereafter, and to withhold nothing that is good from his People. Is not then Perfection a good thing? a Freedom from all Sin to be desir'd? Certainly, But here lies the Point, is it needful to be had in this World? he will not withhold it in his due time, when we have done Suffering: But whilst we are here, his Grace must appear perfect in our Weakness: When we are weak in our selves, then are we strong in him. To the same Purpose, *viz.* of Growth in Grace, is *Mal. iv. 2.* *Ye shall go forth, and grow up as the Calves of the Stall:* He will feed his People, that they may be fat, *Ezek. xxxiv. 13, 14, 15.* *They go from Strength to Strength,* *Psal. lxxxiv. 7.* and *Prov. iv. 18.* *But the Path of the just is as a shining Light, that shineth more and more unto the*

the perfect Day. The Light of a Believer en-creates all his Life long, till at last it comes to *the perfect Day*; (by way of Emphasis) till it terminates, or leads at last to the everlasting Day, the Sabbath in Heaven.

We will just quote one Promise more, and so dismiss this second General, and that is *Isai. xli. 10. Fear not, for I am with thee; Be not dismay'd, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right Hand of my Righteousness.* Not one Word implying Perfection: Every Expression supposes us weak in our selves, and that we shall remain so. *Fear not, i. e.* don't be cast down thus: *For I am with thee*; I am ready at hand to help thee, tho' thou canst not see me at all times: *Be not dismay'd, for I am thy God*; I am thy Father, I have a peculiar Love and Regard for thee; therefore be not thus troubled; for, as I am almighty, *I will uphold thee*: Whatever Trials (as thou must meet with them) thou mayst at any Time be under, I will lay underneath thee my everlasting Arms to support thee; I will suit my Strength to thy Trouble and Weakness; rest then, and rely in times of Affliction on me thy God.

In short, (not to multiply Instances) all the Promises made to Believers, supposes them to be imperfect; and they are made on purpose to be apply'd, particularly when they are groaning under their Imperfections; when they are troubled on one Account or another, from Trials without, Temptations within, buffeting of Satan, or the like; then the Promises take Place: Not to tell them, that here they shall, in time, be rid of their Trials; but that their God is still the same, and will never leave them; that all things

shall

shall work together for their Good; that they shall, in due time, when they have suffer'd their appointed time, be remov'd from this World of Sin and Sorrow, and be translated into their heavenly Father's Kingdom; where all Joy shall be grown to full Perfection, and all Tears shall be wip'd from their Eyes.

For these, and such like Uses, were the Promises made. They strengthen us under Troubles, declare that a time shall come, when Freedom shall be given from all Sin, whatever; but then it is in another World; and the true Believer is satisfy'd with this, he is willing to endure a while (as it is his Father's good Pleasure he should) and wait patiently for the time, when the earthly House of his Tabernacle shall be dissolved, and an abundant Entrance be administer'd to him, into the everlasting Mansion of Bliss and Glory, which the Father has prepar'd for all Christ's Sheep. I believe we may here venture boldly to assert, that there is no Promise made to Believers, that can justly lead us to expect inherent, absolute Perfection in this World.

Wherefore, seeing we have neither Example nor Promise, to prove, or bear up this Doctrine; we may safely proceed to the III. General; To answer the Texts the Perfectionists bring to prove their Doctrine. And, we are here also (if possible) to discover by what means they acquire this Notion. But,

1st, Let us answer (as the Lord shall assist) the Texts they bring; *i. e.* the Sense they put upon them, for the Proof of their Perfection-Doctrine.

One of their greatest is in *Matth. v. 48. Be ye, therefore, perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect.* Now 'tis very plain from the Context,

Context, that our Saviour is only speaking here in the Spirituality of the Law, and had been, from the 17th Verse, shewing them, that they had mistook the Law's Meaning; and that it was more broad, and its Commands more strict than they were apprehensive of. In the beginning of the Discourse, Ver. 17. he tells them, that he was not come to destroy the Law but to fulfil it: And then goes on to open the Law's Meaning and strict Spirituality. You have heard, says he, so and so, but I say thus: I say, the Law is more extensive than you have heard: You have heard its external Commands; but it has internal ones also, and these must be strictly observ'd. Having shewn them, by quoting several of the Commandments, their true Meaning, he comes to the last Verse, *Be ye, therefore, perfect, &c.* by which, I apprehend, two things are enforc'd.

1st, That the Law is as strict and extensive in its Demands, as God is pure and holy.

2^{dly}, That there is an absolute Necessity, that the Righteousness by which we are to be justified in God's Sight, be every way answerable to the Law's extensive Demands. *Be ye, therefore, perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect.* Now, how is our Father, which is in Heaven, perfect? I answer. So as no Creature, merely such, can possibly be; 1 Sam. ii. 2. *There is none holy as the Lord:* He is of infinite Purity and Holiness; or, as Mr. Roberts, in his *Mystery and Marrow of the Bible*, well expresses it, "He is so perfect, nothing can be added to him, to make him more perfect: Nothing can be taken from him, to make him less perfect than he is. He is the highest Perfection of Perfection. All Perfection is originally from him only; and every Creature is more
" or

“ or less perfect, as it more or less approacheth
 “ to God, and hath Resemblance to him.” What
 a perfect God have we to deal with? And, shall
 poor, simple, finite Man, talk of being perfect,
 as his Maker? Let him for ever lie at the Foot
 of his Throne, and confess his own Weakness
 and Imperfection. Wherefore, this Text is no-
 thing to the Perfectionists purpose; it only shews
 us, that for our Justification before God, we must
 have a Righteousness as pure as himself: And
 had not Christ's Righteousness been that of God,
 as well as Man; it would have stood the People
 of God in no stead. The Law speaks in this man-
 ner to every individual Person, (not to Believers,
 as the Perfectionists may think, but to every one)
 be thou as perfect as God: And he that finds not
 such a Perfection in himself (as no Man can) nor
 in another, *he is eternally miserable; for cursed is
 every one that continueth not in all things writ-
 ten in the Law to do them.* How happy and
 blessed then are those that find an Interest in the
 absolute, perfect Righteousness of the Lord
 Jesus!

There is a Text in *Heb. iv. 9.* which, I find,
 Mr. *Wesley*, in his Preface to his Hymns, makes
 use of to signify the State of Perfection, into
 which, he says, some are brought: *There re-
 maineth, therefore, a Rest.* This Rest, I believe,
 may mean a Perfection of Grace; an absolute
 one; but it cannot mean, a State of absolute Per-
 fection in this Life. The Rest that remains for
 the People of God is eternal Glory and Happiness
 hereafter; and, tho' the Apostle in the 3d Verse,
 says, *we that have believed, do enter into Rest;*
 yet he does not mean, that we are got into any
 thing like the Rest above, as to Degree; but

(1.) that we have enter'd into it by Faith; *Faith being the Substance of things hoped for*: Or, (2.) that in kind, we have participated something of that Rest: Or, (3.) that we have enter'd into the Rest, with respect to our Works; we have rested from Hopes of Salvation by them: See Ver. 10. to this purpose. Any one of these Senses of the Text, I believe may be true; but however, we have one thing to offer, which keeps the Text totally from their Sense; and that is this: The same Persons who in the 3d Verse, are said to have enter'd into the Rest, by Believing, are said, in the 15th and 16th Verses of this Chapter, to stand in need of more Grace and Help against their Temptations: *For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touch'd with the feeling of our Infirmities; but was in all things tempted, like as we are, Sin only excepted: Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain Mercy, and find Grace to help in Time of need.* From these two Verses it is very plain, that the Persons that are said to have enter'd into the Rest, are not free from Sin. They were not perfect, not totally excluded or freed from all evil Thoughts: They had Sin still in them, and therefore, they must go to the Throne of Grace for Help and Succour in Time of Necessity. Whatever Rest, therefore, Believers enter into in this World, 'tis not such an one as Mr. Wesley has describ'd in his Preface; as this Place he quoted his Text to prove it from, plainly manifests.

There are two Texts in the iiii. of *Phillippians*, which the *Perfectionists* bring very triumphantly. The first is, Ver. 12. *Not as tho' I had already attain'd, or were already perfect, &c.* the second

cond is, Ver. 15. *Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded, &c.* Here (say they) are the two sorts of Perfection we speak of plainly held forth. In the 12th Verse the Apostle tells us, that he had not attain'd Perfection, but was pressing forwards; i. e. he had not attain'd to such a Perfection, as to have Sin totally rooted out: He was not freed from inward Corruptions; but he had attain'd to a Perfection of Power, to keep them down whenever they mov'd, as appears from Ver. 15. *Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, &c.* i. e. say they, as many of us as have attain'd, thro' Mercy, to this State, as that we can subdue all Sin when it rises; let us be thus minded, to press forward to the Attainment of a Freedom from all manner of Sin.

This is the Sense the *Perfectionists* put on these two Texts: And, I think, they pervert the meaning of them very sadly.

The Perfection which the Apostle speaks of in the 12th Verse, from the Scope and Context, plainly appears to be the Perfection, which is to be attain'd and enjoy'd at the Resurrection of the Dead; at which Resurrection, he desires to be found in Christ's Righteousness; Ver. 9. and in the 12th Ver. he professes plainly, that he had not attain'd to this Perfection, but was following after; *If so be* (says he) *I might apprehend that for which I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.* Now, what was that for which *Paul* was apprehended by Christ? Perfection of Grace in this World? I answer, no: For he himself declares, 1 Cor. xv. 19. *If in this Life only we have Hope, we are of all Men the most miserable.* Certainly, *Paul*, and every other Believer, was, and is apprehended of Christ, for more glorious things than Perfection

tion in this Life. In the 13th Verse, he tells us, he had not apprehended: Apprehended what? Why, the Prize of the high Calling, which is of God in Christ Jesus. This is that which *Paul* was reaching and pressing after, the Prize of the high Calling, the immortal Crown of Life, eternal Glory and Happiness: And this is that, for the Enjoyment of which, *Paul* was apprehended of Christ. Now, in the 15th Verse, he says, *Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded.* What Perfection can *Paul* here mean? From what goes before the Words, I see no other Interpretation to be given of them than this: That as many of us as are perfect and upright, sincere and honest in our Desires, after the Prize of the high Calling, be thus minded, *i. e.* let us determine to reach forth, and press forward to those things that are before. This Sense, as it corresponds with what preceeds, I think, is enough to keep the Text from the *Perfectionists* Sense; for they have neither the preceeding nor following Words, to support their Interpretation. But suppose we could give no Meaning or Sense at all, certainly, we may take the same Liberty as Mr. *Wesley* has, in his Free-Grace Book on Election, and say, Better the Text have no Meaning at all, than what they put on it. But however, I would not (if possible) use such a concise way of arguing; For fear my Readers should not so easily take in my Meaning. But however, if we look to what follows the 15th Verse, I think we may find another Sense, which will still keep the Texts from their Sense. In the 16th Verse, the Apostle exhorts them, that whereunto they had already attain'd, to walk by the same Rule; and afterwards admonishes them, to be-
ware

ware of those who by their outward walk dishonour'd Christ, and were Enemies to his Cross. So that taking the Words in Connection with what follows, they will very well bear this Interpretation, *viz.* as many of us as have attain'd to a perfect, *i. e.* an upright way of Walking and Conversation; let us still go forward; let us walk by the same Rule, still pressing on for the Prize of the high Calling.

There is a Text in *James*, which will give Countenance to this Interpretation; where a Man of a good outward Conversation, is call'd a perfect Man, *Jam. iii. 2.* *In many things* (says the Apostle) *we offend all: If any Man offend not in Word, the same is a perfect Man, and able to bridle the whole Body.* Here a Man of an honest Deportment is call'd a perfect Man, able to bridle the whole Body; not, as perhaps it might be suggested, to keep down all Sin; for the Apostle had just said, that *in many things we offend all.* Thus, I think, it appears, that these two Texts in the *Phillippians* are foreign to their Purpose.

Another of their Texts is *Gen. xvii. 1.* *Walk before me, and be thou perfect.* We have, in the beginning of this Book, plainly shewn, that *Abraham*, to whom this was spoken, was not in either of their Senses perfect: But, however, we shall endeavour to speak to the Words themselves.

It is observ'd by Mr. *Caryll*, that the Word כִּמְּךָ here us'd for perfect, sometimes means upright, or plain, in outward Conversation. Thus the same Word כִּמְּךָ which is us'd for *Job's* being a perfect Man, is us'd in *Gen. xxv. 27.* for *Jacob's* being a plain Man, in Opposition to

Esau's being a cunning Hunter; and in this Place, the Word תָּמִים is us'd to signify perfect in Walk and Conversation; *walk before me, and be thou* (tamim) i. e. *be thou* honest, upright, and plain in thy walk before me; shew plainly by thy outward Demeanour, that thou art one of mine: Or, the Injunction *be thou perfect*, taking the Words in Connection with what follows, may mean, being perfect in observing the Institutions which the Lord in the Chapter appoints; *walk before me, and be thou perfect*; i. e. see that thou strictly observe all that I command thee, in all my appointed Ordinances. In this Sense the Word is us'd, *Deut. xviii. 13. Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God.* This, by consulting the Context, plainly signifies, thou shalt strictly observe all the Lord thy God commandeth thee, respecting thy Behaviour in the good Land.

They have another Text, *1 John iii. 3. Every Man that hath this Hope, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.* "Purity in the upright Man, says "Mr. Roberts *, signifies three things.

" 1. That he is purg'd, cleans'd, and purified
 " from Sin. How? By the Blood of Christ
 " *meritoriously*; by the Spirit and Graces of
 " Christ *efficaciously*; by the Word of Christ
 " *instrumentally*; 'till a Man be cleansed thus
 " from the Spot, Impurity, and Defilement of
 " Sin, he cannot, in God's Account be pure;
 " but remains Sin-defil'd.

" 2. That being thus cleans'd from Sin and
 " Filthiness, he hath such a Principle of Purity
 " inherent and remaining in him, as will not
 " mix or incorporate with Sin. The Spirit

* *Marrow of the Bible*, pag. 484.

" and

“ and the Flesh will not mingle together; but
 “ *are contrary one to another.* Sin and Filthiness
 “ is not woven into the Texture, Frame, and
 “ Constitution of a pure Heart. Sin may be
 “ there; but the Heart doth not allow it, is not
 “ mingled with it; because it is heterogeneous to
 “ the purified Heart: Thus a pure Heart is full
 “ of itself, without Mixture with Sin. As we
 “ call that *pure Gold, pure Honey, pure Water,*
 “ *&c.* which is full of itself without embasing
 “ Mixture.

“ 3. A pure Man is one that is still segrega-
 “ ting, purging out, and cleansing away all the
 “ impure Reliques of Sin, from the Heart and
 “ Soul.” This is what is meant by purifying
 ourselves; having a pure Principle in us, that
 cannot incorporate, or mix with Sin, and is
 continually assisting the Soul against the Mo-
 tions of Sin. Not that it roots Sin totally out;
 but it keeps and encourages continual Enmity
 and Hatred to all Sin in the Man. This is to
 purify our selves as Christ is pure. It is to have
 a Principle, from him, which is pure as himself,
 which momentarily leads the Soul, and moves it
 to what is good; tho’ the Soul often, thro’ want
 of Power and Strength) is overcome.

Another Text they bring, is in *Jam. i. 4.* *But
 let Patience have its perfect Work, that ye may
 be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.* The
 Word *όλόκληροι*, which is here us’d for *entire*, sig-
 nifies such as wholly possess their Portion allotted,
 compleat Inheritors: So the Apostle exhorts them
 to let Patience have her perfect Work, *i. e.* have
 no Impediments, that they might be *όλόκληροι*,
 that they might enjoy that Measure of Grace
 which was allotted them.

Another Text is in *1 Thess. v. 23.* *And the very God of Peace sanctify you throughout.* The Apostle, in this Place (as I apprehend) does no more than wish and pray for the Growth, and Encrease of the inward Man, that that may be perfected and continually growing up, and that, thro' Grace, they might persevere and hold out to the End.

To the same Purpose likewise, is *1 Tim. iii. 17.* *That the Man of God may be perfect, &c.* i. e. that the inward Man, which is created in Purity and Holiness, may have all its Parts in full Growth and Exercise. But none of these Texts, that I can see, prove their Perfection; for, tho' the inward Man be perfect and entire, wanting nothing in itself, yet *we*, consider'd as Compounds, having Sin as well as Grace in us, cannot be stil'd *perfect*, absolutely so.

Thus, then, we have answer'd some of their chief Texts; we have, I think, sufficiently disprov'd their forc'd Sense; and, I think, there is no use made of the Word *perfect*, as regarding us, but what may be taken in some of the following Senses.

1st, In Christ Jesus.

2^{dly}, In the Work of Grace as in itself; the new Man having all its Parts.

3^{dly}, Perfect in Glory and eternal Happiness.

4^{thly}, In a comparative Sense, with respect to others.

5^{thly}, In outward Walk and Conversation. Or,

6^{thly}, Perfect, in a strict Adherence to, and Observance of all divine Commands and Institutions, with respect to outward Worship.

Thus we have dispatch'd the first Branch of our third general Head. We are now to discover,

ver, how, and by what means our *Perfectionists* (probably) come by their Doctrine. I apprehend these three ways :

1st, From a Want of a due Consideration of the essential Purity and Holiness of God.

2^{dly}, From their Ignorance of the strict Spirituality of the Law. And,

3^{dly}, From their Ignorance of the Nature of Regeneration and Sanctification.

1st, Then, this Perfection-Notion may arise from a Want of due Consideration of the essential Purity and Holiness of God. *Behold he putteth no Trust in his Saints, and the Heavens are not clean in his Sight; how then should Man be clean, or he that is born of a Woman be righteous?* Job xv. 14, 15. What a wicked Idea must they have of God, that think his pure and all-searching Eyes can find no Flaw in their Obedience. Surely, they must put the infinite, and incomprehensible, pure God, on a Level with narrow, finite, and impure Creatures; if they pretend to be absolutely, inherently perfect in his Eyes: But, how should Man be just with God? he may be so with Man, his Fellow Creature; but with God, all the World must acknowledge themselves guilty and imperfect, as *Job* acknowledges, Chap. ix. Ver. 3. *If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him for one of a thousand.* No, if he were to lay Justice to the Line, and Righteousness to the Plummert, and try the ways of the most upright Perfectionist the World can produce, he would find him wanting, he would find him light as Vanity. The Holiness and Purity of God laid in a Ballance, would draw down, and infinitely over-weigh the Righteousnesses of all the Saints that are and have, since

the Creation, been in this World. God's Holiness is himself: Without Holiness he is not God: *Once* (saith he) *have I sworn by my Holiness,* *Psal. lxxxix. 36.* that is I have sworn by myself, as the Apostle himself explains it, *Heb. vi. 13.* *Because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself.* Is Holiness then essential to God? how infinitely extensive must it be! * "God is an
 " absolute Being in all respects. Man, tho'
 " perfect in his kind, yet is not perfect in all
 " kinds: somewhat may be taken from Man
 " and he remain a Man still; but God is so
 " perfect that nothing can be added to, or taken
 " from him; all things are laid up in him, he
 " is the Entity of Entities."

As God is the Being of Beings, his Holiness is the Holiness of Holiness; he is holy above all our Conceptions and Ideas; how then can Man stand before him and he not see a Default in him? None that think on what God is, that he is Holiness itself, will dare to say, that they are absolutely pure in his Eyes. Let us all then (as becomes weak, frail, finite Creatures) lay our Hands on our Mouths, and our Mouths in the Dust, and cry, Unclean, Unclean, when we think on the infinite, essential Holiness of the Almighty. He is so pure and holy, that our most refin'd and exalted Conceptions can never in the least reach him.

2dly, This Perfection-Notion may arise ('tis quite probable) from an Ignorance of the strict Spirituality and Extent of the Law.

The Law is a Transcript of the Divine Mind, pure as he is pure: And he that says, he comes up constantly to the Law's Injunctions, without

* *Caryll on Job.*

the least Mixture of Sin, must certainly be ignorant, how vastly extensive the Law is: I think it may be justly said, its Dimensions are infinite. Extension is commonly defin'd to be that which has *partes extra partes*; Parts exterior to, or beyond Parts: Thus the Law of God, it has *jussa extra jussa*; Commands upon Commands *ad infinitum*: And the least Motion, or Stir of Sin, is a Transgression of the Law, and constitutes a Person imperfect.

: The bare-fac'd Impudence of those who pretend to be perfect is astonishing: To talk of being absolutely free from Sin, and of fulfilling all the Law commands, when they don't do it externally. Don't we daily see some of them with two Coats on; nay, some of them very well dress'd, and at the same time, a poor Beggar that they pass by, who has not Cloaths to cover their Nakedness? Is this fulfilling the Law? Why don't they cover the Naked, feed the Hungry, and bestow all their Goods on the Poor? Do they love their Neighbours (which are all Mankind) as well as themselves, when they daily pass poor, hungry, starv'd Creatures, and have Money in their Pockets, and don't bestow it? Surely, they must forget what our Saviour says, *Matt. v. 42. Give to them that ask thee.* Alas, the Law requires, if thou hast but one Coat in the World, and seest thy Fellow-Creature here in want, that thou let him have it one Day, and thy self another; or else thou canst not love him as thy self. How can we think these Persons perfect (as they pretend) when they break the Law every Day, and don't perform it externally; and, if not externally, I am apt to think, they can't internally.

If they will be *perfect*, (as our Saviour tells the young Man, *Matt. xix. 20.*) let them sell all that they have and give to the Poor: Not to the Poor that are of the Household of Faith only; for that is not fulfilling the Law: *If ye Love them that love you, what thank have ye? And if ye salute your Brethren, what do ye more than others,* *Matt. xlii. 47.* Let not these People talk any longer of Perfection (however that they have attain'd it) unless they will shew to the World, that they are so, by their outward Behaviour: Tho', in the main, this will not do, except they do all, out of a pure Love to, and sincere Desire of, the Glory and Honour of their Lord and Redeemer. And if they have the least Side-way Glance, or Deviation from it, in all their Doings, they Spoil all: For *if I give all my Goods to the Poor, and have not Charity, I am nothing.*

But however, if they pretend to be *perfect*, let them shew something like it. To wish well and not to do well, will never stand for Perfection, (*James ii. 15, 16.*) their Lights must shine forth, or else, none can distinguish what they are, or glorify their Father on their Accounts. But to proceed,

3dly, This Notion of Perfection may arise from their Ignorance of the Spirit's manner of working in Regeneration and Sanctification: I mean, wherein Regeneration and Sanctification consist.

But here I must make one Observation, by way of Distinction. Those who assert they have attain'd Perfection: Their Notion arises from the two Quarters just mention'd, *viz.* Ignorance of God's essential Holiness, and of the strict Spirituality of his Law. But those who only assert

it

it to be attainable in this Life, I apprehend, their Thoughts arise from a general mistaken Conception of what Regeneration and Sanctification are. They, with many others, take Regeneration to be a Change of Nature's Principles: That those Principles which once led the Soul to nothing but Sin, are then turn'd to God, and direct the Soul Heavenward; and that Sanctification is a continual renewing, and making these Principles more holy. Now such a Notion as this directly leads to Perfection: And were I, or any one else, to take things in this Light, we must, if consistant with ourselves, own Perfection attainable, for that which is every Day renewing, will in time be perfect; for the new Creature, we are told, grows up to a perfect Man in Christ Jesus.

As this Notion leads to Perfection, so does that which teaches us, that Sanctification is a continual *taking away* of Nature's Principles. Let us then define what Regeneration and Sanctification are. Regeneration (as I take it) is an instantaneous Infusion of gracious Principles, or Qualities into the Soul: Principles which come from God, and tend continually to him. And Sanctification is the continual Growth and Increase of these Principles. Regeneration is not partial, but total; *i. e.* these Principles or Qualities are diffus'd thro' every Faculty of the Soul; and, for this Reason, a Person that is born again is call'd a *new Creature*, 2 Cor. v. 17, 18. *Old things are past away; behold all things are become new.* The Man in this Sense, is an entire new Man; he has a new Principle in every Faculty of his Soul; his Mind, his Thoughts, his Conscience, his Will, his Affections are all renew'd;

new'd; they are led by Principles from above. Thus the new Man is of the same Extent as the old one; tho' the old carnal Principles remain the same, *i. e.* they are all still in the Person; tho' they have not that Dominion and Power they had before. Before Regeneration the Soul was totally and entirely led by sinful Principles by the old Man; but now they have other Desires, other Principles diametrically opposite to the carnal ones; which momentarily resist and fight against them: And this is what causes the Commotions and Wars which are in the Believer's Soul; the new and old Man cannot agree; they are contrary one to the other, and therefore are continually warring. Now, these Principles which are born from above, are those which cannot sin, *i. e.* cannot lead the Soul to Sin, because they are born of God; 1 John iii. 9. *Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit Sin; for his Seed remaineth in him; and he cannot Sin, because he is born of God.* This Text is one (as the *Perfectionists* think) vastly for their Purpose. Observe say they, *he cannot Sin, because he is born of God.* Can Words be plainer? I answer, No, nothing can be more full to the purpose; but then it is to this Purpose, that a Man cannot Sin with those Principles which constitute him regenerate. Observe, the Word saith, *he doth not commit Sin; because his Seed remaineth in him.* Whose Seed remaineth in him? I answer, the Seed of God, part of the Grace wherewith Christ was anointed above his Fellows: This is what remaineth in the regenerate; and with this Seed a Person cannot Sin, because he is born of God: It is this Seed that constitutes a Person regenerate,

and

and with this Seed it is impossible for him to sin.

This, as I take it, is the Sense of the Holy Spirit in this Place; and in Chap. v. Ver. 18. the Apostle says, *Whatsoever is born of God, &c.* which strengthens the former Interpretation, that it is something infus'd into the Soul, that constitutes the Person born of God: This is what overcometh the World, or what the wicked one cannot touch, because it is born of God, Ver. 18. But however these Texts, tho' quoted to prove Perfection, we may observe, are not for the Purpose, for these two Reasons.

1. Because (if their Interpretation be just) a Person, the Instant he is born again, must be absolutely perfect; for the Text speaks direct, *Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit Sin.* Sure they cannot, or will not allow this; for if they do, their Scheme entirely shuts out Sanctification. But, to be plain, it is the most difficult thing in the World, to know what they do allow or hold, as a Point of Doctrine; and that any one will find, if they will trouble themselves so far as to discourse with them. But,

2dly, The Texts in this Epistle will not serve to hold up the Perfection-Doctrine, because the Persons who are said in Chap. v. Ver. 19. to be *of God*, are in the 21st Verse, caution'd against Idols. Such a Caution is needless, where Persons are perfect.

To conclude this Head, then, we ought always carefully to make the following Distinctions.

1. That in every Believer, there are Principles of a quite different Nature from one another, viz. the old and the new Man: The former is
conti.

continually for leading the Soul to Sin; the latter cannot by any means, because it is born of God.

2. That this new Man, these gracious Principles in themselves, and abstractedly considered from every thing else are perfect, absolutely so.

3. That all our Actions, as coming from us, who have still the old Man in us, cannot be perfect. Sin will accompany our Endeavours: So that whilst we are in this World, we can but be *perfect in part*, 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10. Grace cannot have the sole, entire, total Dominion of our Souls. This then is the Conclusion: Tho' at the Time of Regeneration, pure, perfect, and holy Principles are infus'd into, and diffus'd thro' every Faculty of the Soul: And tho' Sanctification be the continual Growth and Advancement of these holy Principles; yet as Sin, till Death, will remain in us, we, nor our Actions, can in no wise be absolutely perfect: Sin, like a Fly in the Box of Ointment, will marr whatsoever we do: Wherefore the best of our Performances stand in need of Christ's Blood, to render them pleasing and acceptable in God's Sight.

Thus, then, we have finish'd the Third general Head. We have answer'd some of their Texts, and discover'd how they, probably, acquire their Perfection-Doctrine. Tho', really, it is very hard to assign *any particular* way; but what I have assign'd, tho', perhaps not *the very* way; yet, I am sure, they are the ways which directly lead to it: Ignorance of God, of the Law, and of the Nature of Regeneration, &c. When Persons pretend to Perfection, or assert it attainable, whatever be the particular means that brought them into the Notion, the three above-mention'd

mention'd must, of Necessity be Concomitants : For he that has a due Knowledge and Conception of them, will never, if in his Senses, give into the Doctrine. And it is astonishing, to see what Numbers are led aside by it : Sure the Promoter of it should have the alluring Tongue of a Syren ; or else, the threatening, storming one of a Pope : For, as there are none, or very weak Arguments to uphold it ; it must be a storming, positive way of asserting it, that must bring so many into the Notion : Or else, a cursing and damning the contrary Doctrine ; loading it with a Multitude of pretended Blasphemies said to attend it, as Mr. *Wesley* has done Election ; tho' he has of late found out another way (I can't tell how successful it has been) viz. of cursing and damning himself, if what he says be not true, and if the contrary be not false. We may see to this purpose, in his new Hymn Book, in an Hymn entitled *Universal Redemption*, pag. 135. the Words are these :

Ver. VIII.

*Good God ! that any Child of thine,
So horribly should think on thee !
Lo ! all my Hopes I here resign,
If all may not find Grace with me.*

IX.

*If Fury can in thee have Place,
Empty it on my helpless Head ;
Cut off, exclude me from thy Grace,
Unless for all the Saviour dy'd.*

X.

X.

*If all may not thy Mercy claim,
On me the vengeful bolt let fall,
Take back my Interest in the Lamb,
Unless the Victim dy'd for all.*

I don't know but this way of enforcing an Argument, may be of great Use to Mr. Wesley in procuring Profelytes; for the Ignorant will probably think, that that Doctrine *must* be true, that such a good Man as Mr. Wesley, will pawn his Salvation upon: But, however, I can't think but it is a very wicked way, to damn himself on the Truth of every whim. I don't know, that he uses the same way to enforce Perfection to his Attendants; neither do I see any Occasion for it; for it is my certain Belief, as well as many others, that whatever he gives forth as Truth, is receiv'd as such, *nemine contradicente*; his bare Pleasure and Will that a thing should be so is enough; he needs only say, *Sic volo, sic jubeo*, and it will follow immediately, *Stet pro ratione Voluntas*. But to proceed,

We are come to the IVth general; To shew that some dangerous Consequences attend this Perfection-Doctrine. Which are as follow:

1st, It encourages Pride.

2^{dly}, It cuts off all Dependance on Christ, the Fountain of all Grace.

3^{dly}, It totally sets aside the way of access to God. And consequentially,

4th, It sets aside Prayer, especially those two great Parts of it, Confession and Petition.

1st, Then, it encourages Pride. The *Laodiceans* seem to have been in the same Plight with our

our Perfectionists, *Rev. iii. 17. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and encreased with Goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art ignorant, and poor, and blind, and naked. This is the Perfectionist's Case, they are rich, and encreased with Goods. Some of them are absolutely perfect (as they tell us) they stand in need of nothing: But hear what the Holy Spirit says of such; they are miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; and, to add to their Misery, they know it not; thou knowest not, &c. Alas, if the Spirit here relates the Truth, whoever say they are perfect, they know nothing of God nor themselves. What a great Degree of Pride would it be for a poor, miserable, destitute Beggar to set himself on a Level with King George; it would be more like Madness than any thing else. And yet this is the Case of these ignorant Creatures, they would, nay, pretend to be inherently as holy as God; for that Text is continually in their Mouths, *Matt. v. ult. Be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father, &c.* 'Tis true we are so by Imputation, the Righteousness of Christ being that of God, as well as Man, he being personally united to Jehovah in the second Person; wherefore he is call'd, *Jehovah our Righteousness*, *Jer. xxiii. 6.* But this is nothing to the purpose. No Creature can ever be infinitely Holy, *for who can say, I am pure from my Sin? For there is no Man that sinneth not,* *1 Kings viii. 46.**

This Doctrine naturally leads to *Pride*, both with respect to God and Man. With respect to God; it is setting thy self, a poor, sinful Creature, on a Level with thy Maker; for *there is none good, i. e. perfectly so, save God, Matt. xix. 17.* but these Men are absolutely good. Sure, the

the Pride of their Hearts must be exceedingly great. With respect to Man it leads to Pride, inasmuch, as if we fancy ourselves perfect, our Language must be with *Israel* of old; stand by thyself, come not near me, for I am more holy than thou; but such a People as these are as *Smoke in God's Nose*, *Isa. lxxv. 5*. Were any truly perfect, such Language would be right and inoffensive; but when poor, imperfect, sinful Man comes out with such Language, it discovers the greatest Pride: They talk of being better than other People, when they are the same, only worse in discovery, their Talk betrays them. Let us all then beware of such a Doctrine. But,

2dly, As it encourages Pride; so it cuts off Dependence on Christ for any supplies of Grace, those that are perfect, have no need of Christ to communicate any more Grace to them; they may set down and enjoy themselves by themselves, they are rich and want nothing; but sure such a Doctrine cannot be according to Truth. *Paul* bids *Timothy* be strong in the Grace, which is in Christ Jesus, *2 Tim. ii. 1*. but these who talk of Perfection, are strong in what they have inherently, they confide in that for help. No reliance on the Grace that is in him, when he has given a perfect Measure of it already.

It is said, *Prov. iii. 34*. That God giveth Grace to the lowly? What is it to be lowly? If not to see a Self-Insufficiency and want of Grace; but a perfect Person can see no Self-Insufficiency, when he is totally and entirely filled with God. But then,

3dly, This Doctrine tends to set aside the way of Access to God, viz. by Christ Jesus, these People that are got to Perfection want not Christ, they

they can come into the Presence of an All-pure God, and he nor his Law find any Fault with their Performances ; but let them remember that out of Christ, our God is a consuming Fire, not only with regard to his accepting us as Righteous, *i. e.* for our Justification ; but in all our Addresses if we come not in and thro' the Lord Jesus, if he does not sanctify the Gift, it is in no ways acceptable: out of Christ, our Offerings are as strange Fire. Now the Perfectionists would here be ready to say : O! to be sure, we go to God in the Name of Christ, we would not go to the Throne without him ; but I say and will stand to it, that if you are perfect you take a useless Thing with you. When Believers (as I apprehend) take Christ in the Arms of their Faith to the Throne, they do it out of a Sense of their own Imperfection and Unworthyness, and of their Incapacity of offering of themselves a Sacrifice that is not lame and weak. What can the Perfectionists say, it is in Christ that makes their Services acceptable? If it be not his perfect Righteousness ; whosoever then has one truly perfect himself, it follows that he wants not Christ's. Wherefore let this be another Caution against this Perfection ; it sets aside Christ who is the only way of Access to the Father. But,

4^{thly}, This Doctrine tends to set aside Prayer ; especially those two great Parts of it, Petition and Confession. As the Perfectionists (according to their Scheme) can't come into the Presence of God in and thro' Christ, who is the only true way ; so neither when they do come have they any Thing to do there: They have nothing Spiritually to ask for, because they want nothing, *their Souls being full of God* : they have nothing

to confess, for they are free from all Sin ; yea even from evil Thoughts, so that they cannot enter into them, no not for one Instant. What can we conceive then these People have to do at a Throne of Grace ? They can do nothing that I know of but what the Pharisee did, stand by their selves and say in their own Language : *God I thank thee, that I am not as other Men are ;* this they may say but not one Word more ; tho' I believe such a Thanksgiving, even as this, would go very hardly down with them, *i. e.* with our modern Perfectionists : For, as they acknowledge no discriminating Grace, making a Difference betwixt one Man and another ; I can't see how they can thank God, that they are not as other Men. I think, such a short Ejaculation as I shall now set down, would be vastly more proper for them. " God, I am now come to return thee
 " Thanks, for that part I have had in thy uni-
 " versal Gift of saving Grace : I was thy Crea-
 " ture, of the Race of *Adam* ; and, as thou
 " wast pleas'd to create me at first ; so, by vir-
 " tue of that Creation, I was entitled, as fallen,
 " to a Portion, a Measure of Grace sufficient to
 " save me ; as were the rest of Mankind. I
 " have now, Lord, by my own Strength, im-
 " prov'd thy Talent, and have arriv'd to a State
 " of Perfection : Glory belongs to thee, for
 " creating me a Man ; Praise and Self-satisfac-
 " tion to my self, for improving the Grace
 " which I have enjoy'd, common with other
 " Men, World without end. *Amen.*"

This Prayer is directly correspondent with our modern Perfectionist's Scheme of Universal Love. God, with them, must Love all Men alike, or else he is unjust—*God is not Hate*, says Mr. *Wesley*,
but

but God is Love. Every Man must have a Talent of Grace to profit withal; and if he does profit with it, who is he to thank for it? Not God; for if he had been no better to himself, than God was to him, he might have perish'd with Judas. God bestow'd his Grace in common; therefore, if one is happy, and another miserable, it is entirely owing to the good Care and Consideration of the first, and to the Foolishness and Neglect of the other. So that, in short, our modern Perfectionists can do nothing in Prayer, respecting God, but thank him, that he saw good to make them *Men*. But however (without arguing any more at present *quoad homines*) the Perfection-Doctrine in general cuts of Prayer; they can't, like others of the Children of God, confess the Sins of their holy Things; for they have none: Nay, in their spiritual Duties, *they are freed from all Wandrings; they have no Thoughts of any thing past, absent, or to come, but God alone; to whom their Souls flow in one even Stream, and in whom they are swallow'd up.* They can ask for Forgiveness of no Sins whatever: Of present? They have none: Past? They are suppos'd to be always under the Comforts of Pardon in Christ Jesus: *For, they are freed from all Darknes, having no Fear, no Doubt, either as to their State in general, or as to any particular Action.*

It is remarkable, that our Saviour in the Form of Prayer he deliver'd, after the Petition, *give us this Day our daily Bread; add, and forgive us our Trespases.* What Trespases? Our daily Trespases; as we forgive them that (daily) trespass against us: And for *this* (says David, *Psal. xxxii. 6*) *shall every one that is godly pray unto thee;*

thee; i. e. for such a Pardon of Transgressions as I have obtain'd, shall all the godly pray unto thee. Observe, it is the godly that are to pray for Pardon: These, as well as others, stand in need of Forgiveness for their daily Sins.

When I say Forgiveness of daily Sins, I would not be understood, that on our Commission of Sin, there is a fresh or new Act of Pardon in God; but that a fresh Sense of pardoning Love in Christ Jesus is wrought in our Souls; for when we were pardon'd in Christ, we were forgiven all together; but on our Commission of Sin, we have need of a fresh Application of Pardon: 'Tis one and the same Pardon, only at different Times apply'd.

But to proceed; this Perfection-Doctrine destroys all our Confessions and Self-Abasements; and, I am perswaded, if this was the only dangerous Consequence that attended it, it would be enough to make the true Believer abhor it; for he sees daily so much of Sin in him, that he has occasion momentarily to be humbled before the Lord: And it is quite natural; for as Grace encreases in the Soul, so the Sight and Knowledge of our Unworthiness and Vileness encreases also; which makes every Believer ready, with the Apostle Paul, to say, *It is a faithful Saying, and worthy of all Acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the World to save Sinners, of whom I am chief.* Paul thought *himself* the chief, and every gracious Soul thinks he is the chief; and as he grows in Grace he thinks the more so*.

But, upon the whole, as this Perfection-Doctrine has no Example of the Saints, Precept,

* See the Nature of this describ'd in *Erskine's Gospel Sonnets*, pag. 265.

Promise, nor Scripture, to uphold it, it may very justly be exploded, and the Asserters and Promoters of it, rightly esteem'd to be in a Dream, or fond Delusion: and seeing such abominable Consequences attend it, I hope, thro' Grace, no serious Person will be left to embrace it. We come now in the

Vth. and last Place, Briefly to observe, where our true Gospel-Perfection lies. The Apostle tells us, that it is alone in Christ Jesus; *Of him, says he, are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption,* 1 Cor. i. 30. Hence then, let us observe a few things.

1st, How we come to have this Perfection in Christ Jesus.

2^{dly}, What sort of a Perfection it is.

3^{dly}, What are the Consequences attending our thus being perfect in Christ.

1st, Then, How do we come to have this Perfection in the Lord Jesus? The Text before quoted informs us; *of him, are ye in Christ,* i. e. of the sovereign good Will of God. The Will and good Pleasure of God are the original Fountain and Source of all we are? *By the Grace of God,* says Paul, *I am what I am,* 1 Cor. xv. 10. And again, *it pleas'd the Father, that in him all Fulness should dwell,* Col. i. 19. So that all our Happiness and Comfort arise from God's sovereign Pleasure, and eternal free Grace.

We may conceive of it thus: Jehovah having from all Eternity, entertain'd Designs of Love and Favour to a particular Number of Mankind, that he might secure their everlasting Happiness and Glorification with himself, secur'd them in

their Head, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is of two distinct Natures and one Person for ever : And in him they had all necessary Grace treasur'd up, to bring them to an eternal World of Glory. So that the original Cause of all the Saints Happiness, is the pure, unmerited Love of God ; *For, by Grace we are sav'd, thro' Faith, and that not of ourselves, 'tis the Gift of God : Not of Works, lest any Man should boast, Eph. ii. 8, 9.* And in Chap. i. the Apostle tells us, *we are chosen in him before the Foundation of the World.* The Answer then is very ready : Whence have we Perfection in the Lord Jesus ? From the free Love and good Pleasure of the *Father of Lights, from whom every good and every perfect good comes, Jam. i. 16.*

Use I. Have we seen ourselves interested in this Love ? How should we be led to adore the discriminating good Pleasure of God, that he should have Designs of Love and Favour to such as we are ; that we and not others, should be secur'd in the Lord Jesus : Oh adorable, free, sovereign, distinguishing Love !

Use II. The Consideration of these Things, should induce us continually to have humble, mean, and low Thoughts of ourselves ; never to attribute any thing of our Salvation to our selves, but all to Grace.

Use III. Has God out of his pure, unmerited Love, done so much for us ? The Consideration of this (under the Spirit's Influences) will induce all our Affections to him, and lead us to perform all our Actions to his Glory.

Use IV. Is God's Love the Original and Foundation of our Happiness ? The Sureness, Immortality, and Stability of this Love, is matter of
the

the highest Comfort. Has God lov'd us into Christ, he will eternally love us; for *he is not Man, that he should change, nor the Son of Man, that he should repent.* But,

2dly, Let us examine, what sort of Perfection it is, we have in this our glorious Head. We have seen its original; let us now (if it may please the Lord) delight ourselves in what sort of a Perfection we have. And,

1st, There is a Perfection of Knowledge and Wisdom in Christ. The Text says, he is made unto us *Wisdom*, &c. We are, by the Fall, poor, short-sighted, ignorant Creatures: The Eyes of our Understandings are totally darkned; We know nothing at all as we ought: We are miserable, but know it not: But our Head has a Perfection of Wisdom and Knowledge; he knows all our Wants and Distresses, and knows also how, and when to apply Comfort and Assistance.

This our Head (the Lyon of the Tribe of *Judah*) has *seven Eyes*, Rev. v. 6. an entire Perfection of Wisdom and Understanding: And this he has two ways:

1st, As he is in his highest Nature the omniscient God; *He knoweth all Men, and needeth not that any should testify of Man, for he knoweth what is in Man*, John ii. 24, 25. All the Trials, Troubles, and Afflictions of his People are well known to the God-Man Mediator: The most minute Circumstance passes not his Intelligence, *for his Eyes run to and fro thro' the whole Earth*, 2 Chron. xvi. 9. we might say many things with respect to this Omniscieny and Wisdom of God. As,

1. In whatever Troubles we are, he is not ignorant of them, and if he knows them we may assure ourselves he has appointed them, and therefore we ought to rest satisfied.

2. As he is omniscient and all-wise, we may assure ourselves he exercises us with nothing but what is for our good; for *all things work together for good to those that love God.*

3. Is the Believer's Husband *his Maker, the Lord of Hosts*, the all-wise God? he knows the most opportune Times for releasing us out of Troubles and administering Comfort. All these should give us Divine Contentment in all manner of Circumstances. But again,

2dly, Our Head is full of Wisdom and Knowledge in his human Nature, being well experienc'd and vers'd in all our Temptations and Tryals; *for we have not an High Priest which cannot be touch'd with the feeling of our Infirmities; but was in all things tempted as we are, yet without Sin*, Heb. iv. 5. Such an High Priest became us, who has a Perfection of Knowledge and Wisdom, both as God, and from his Experience as Man; he is one that *can have Compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way*, Heb. v. 2. What a comfortable, sweet Doctrine is this to the troubled Believer, to consider, that his Head has been experimentally acquainted with all his Troubles? He (as Man) well knows what it is to want Relief, and therefore, can better commiserate the Indigent.

2dly, In Christ, Believers have a Perfection of Righteousness for Justification.

By our Fall we have set our selves at an infinite Distance from God; we have violated his holy Law, and run in Debt to his Justice: And
had

had we had our Deserts, should long ago have been in Hell. But here the Love of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost to the Elect, manifestly appear'd: The Elect out of the pure Mass, had been given to Christ for his Bride and Spouse; and when they had, by *Adam's* Transgression, made themselves miserable and sinful; *he*, out of the pure Love he bore to them, as his well-beloved Spouse, engag'd with the Father, laid himself under an Obligation to bring them back, and set them before his Face holy and without Blame: He voluntarily gave himself a Propitiation for their Sins, and readily said, *Lo I come, in the Volume of the Book it is written of me, I delight to do thy Will, O my God; yea, thy Law is in my inward Parts.* The Language of our glorious Head, was like that of *Judab's* to his Father *Jacob* concerning *Benjamin*, Gen. xliii. 9. *I will be Surety for him, of my Hand shalt thou require him: If I bring him not back and set him before thee, then let me bare the Blame for ever.* And in Pursuance to such Engagements, in the Fulness of time the Redeemer came, *made of a Woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, &c.* Gal. iv. 4, 5. He wrought out a perfect Righteousness, active and passive, and by once offering up of himself, has for ever perfected them that are sanctified, Heb. x. 14. The Robe of his Righteousness, which is broad enough to cover all our Sins, and to hide all our Blackness and Deformity, has the Father accepted as ours; for he is of God made unto us *Righteousness*, the Father being well pleased for his *Righteousness* sake, Isai. xli. 21. He is entirely well pleased with fallen Man, for the sake of this perfect Righteousness which our Head possesses;

possesses; *For he has magnify'd the Law and made it honourable* Such an Head as this is may the Believer triumph in, and say with the Church in *Canticles*, *This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend; O ye Daughters of Jerusalem.*

Use I. This should lead us to admire the glorious and all-wise Scheme of our Salvation. Our eternal Happiness, we see, arises from our being put into, and secur'd in our Head the Lord Jesus: Had it not been so, we had perish'd with the rest of *Adam's* Seed in our Sins.

Use II. This should induce us highly to prize and value the Lord Jesus; and at the same time, lead us to Wonder and Amazement, at the great Love of our Head, that he should still love us, tho' we had voluntarily revolted from him; *in this God commendeth his Love unto us, that while we were yet Sinners Christ died for us: and while we are yet without Strength, in due time Christ dy'd for the Ungodly.* It was for the Ungodly; this vastly enhances the Love. When we were Sinners, vile, abominable Sinners, and were totally incapacitated to help ourselves, then our Head, out of his pure Respect and Love to us, freely gave himself for us, and brought us back from the Ruins of the Fall, to the Enjoyment of eternal Happiness and Salvation. May we continually be enabled to rejoice and triumph in, trust and rely upon, this Perfection of Righteousness which is in the Lord Jesus; *for there is no other Name under Heaven whereby we can be sav'd, but the Name of Jesus,* Acts iv. 12.

3dly, In Christ we have a Perfection of Sanctification; *he was anointed with the Oyl of Gladness above his Fellows,* Heb. i. 9. The Fulness and Treasures of Grace, are all deposited in Christ,

Christ, and of this *Fulness we all receive, and Grace for Grace*, John i. 16. *i. e.* we have received Grace from his Fulness on the pure Account of Grace, that being the original of all we enjoy ; or *Grace for Grace* : Grace to use Grace, or otherwise one degree of Grace after another. But,

4thly, In Christ we have a Perfection of Power. *Help is laid on one that is Mighty* ; the Lion of the Tribe of *Judah* has seven Horns, a Perfection of Strength, *He is able to save to the uttermost* : And in spite of all the Opposition that can be made, he will push down and entirely overcome all his and our Enemies, for to him all Power in Heaven and Earth is given, *Matt. xxviii. 18.*

Use I. Hence, Note the Folly of those who rely on any Thing short of the Power of Christ, to bring them thro' a World of Temptations and Trials, safe to Eternal Happiness.

Use II. The Almighty Power of the Redeemer, is matter of the greatest Joy to the troubled and tempted Believer : tho' we are weak he is strong : And how does the Considerations of the Mediator's Power (under the Spirit's Influence) rejoice the Heart of the poor, distressed, impotent Soul, when he finds the World, the Flesh, and the Devil too strong for him ; to think that tho' Satan and his naughty Heart, are Adversaries too strong and mighty, for him to deal with ; yet his glorious Head as in Union with *Jehovah*, is Almighty ! Oh ! says the Soul, tho' I am weak in myself, yet blessed be his Name, *in him have I Righteousness and Strength* ; my Redeemer is *my Shield, and my great Defence, my God is my Husband, the Lord of Hosts is his Name, the King of Glory,*

Glory, the Lord strong and mighty in Battle, is my Confidence ; he will overcome all thy Power Satan, tho' I cannot; I acknowledge his Power, and own my Weakness. This is the Language of Faith, when it views and considers the Perfection of Power which is in Christ. We shall now in the 3d Place, see what are the Consequences, attending the Perfection of Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Power treasured up in Christ. One great and main Consequence is, that whatever he has we are to partake of ; are we ignorant, he is wise. And if we see our want of Wisdom, he has given us sufficient Encouragement to apply to him. For, *If any Man want Wisdom* (saith the Apostle James) *let him ask it of God who giveth liberally and upbraideth not*, Jam. i. 5. or as the saying is, he does not brow-beat us, because we are indigent amongst Men, sometimes when a Person asks their Charity, they upbraid them, and tell them they are idle and deserve nothing at all, though, perhaps, they may give them something at the same time ; but this is not the Case with our gracious and merciful Father, *he gives liberally*, &c. He gives without the least grudging ; among Men sometimes, tho' they may give very largely, yet they grudge what they bestow, and may, perhaps, wish they had their Bounty again ; but our great Donor of all Gifts, is as willing to bestow as we are to ask, and at the same time makes not the least mention of our wilfully losing what we once had, *he giveth liberally and upbraideth not*. Hence, Note,

1st, How ignorant soever we may be, God has Wisdom enough to supply our Wants, and is continually free and ready to assist us.

2dly, As *God* will not upbraid us for our wilful Ignorance, it should therefore be no Impediment to hinder us from a Throne of Grace. Satan often tells us, we are too ignorant and foolish to go to a God of all Wisdom: And that he will have nothing to say to such poor Creatures as we are. But this is a Delusion; we can never be too ignorant to go to God; and tho' he is Wisdom itself, and we Ignorance; yet he will not upbraid us, but freely bestow all we ask in Faith. But again,

Is Christ perfectly righteous? It follows, that all his People, every Believer shall be imputatively so likewise; for *his Righteousness is upon all that believe*. Are we destitute of a justifying Righteousness? he has one will supply all our Wants, and cover all our Nakedness.

Use I. This should induce us to glory in nothing short of Christ's Righteousness for our Justification and Acceptance with God. The poor Rags of our Performances, can never stand us in any stead before the Bar of God's Justice; Christ's and his alone, must do the Business.

Use II. Are we accepted alone for the sake of Christ? Let us (as help'd by Grace) never go to a Throne of Grace without him: His Righteousness must perfume our Services, or else, they will never be grateful. Has our Redeemer a Perfection of Grace and Sanctification? it follows, that he has a Sufficiency for the whole Elect, and they shall all receive their Portion, in due Season; for *he will give Grace and Glory, and no good thing will be withhold from them that walk uprightly*.

Use I. This should lead us (under a Sense of our short Comings) to apply to him for more Grace. And,

2dly, It should excite also an holy Discontentment with all our Attainments: It should induce us still to be aspiring after greater Sanctification: Christ's Treasury will never be exhausted: We may go, and go, and go again, and yet find him perfectly full. But,

Lastly, If Christ has a Perfection of Power, the Consequence is,

1st, That not one of his Elect shall finally perish, he giveth *them eternal Life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his Hand*, John x. 28. Here is matter of the greatest Consolation: That thro' the Almighty Power of the God-Man, neither Satan nor the World, shall be able to separate them from their Beloved, *For*, saith the Apostle, *I am perswaded, that neither Death, nor Life, nor Principalities, nor Powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any other Creature, shall be able to separate us from the Love of God which is in Christ Jesus*, Rom. viii. 37. *Nay, in all these things they are more than Conquerors.* What glorious Language is this! it is the Life and Marrow of Christianity, when the Soul can thus triumph in the almighty, everlasting Love of God. Once more:

2dly, From the Power of Christ it follows, that he will support his People under all Satan's Assaults, and at last will entirely bruise him under their Feet: *And when this Corruption shall have put on Incorruption, and this Mortality Immortality, then shall be fulfill'd the Saying which*
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is written, Death is swallow'd up of Victory. And thus, thro' the Wisdom, Power, and Grace which is in Christ Jesus, Believers shall be brought to the full Enjoyment of their beloved Redeemer, and so shall be ever with the Lord.

Such a Perfection as is thus laid up in Christ, may you and I (Reader) ever triumph and be found in: And the other, which is so much talk'd of and pretended to, and at the same time so little practis'd, may we always contemn; since the Lord has not, by Example in others, Precept, nor Promise, given any Countenance to.

I will now conclude with that noble Petition of the Church of *England* in her Litany, "From
" all false Doctrine, Heresy, and Schism, good
" *Lord deliver us.*" Amen.





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C O P Y

O F

Mr. *WHITEFIELD*'s Letter to
Mr. *WESLEY*, relating to
the Doctrine of *PERFECTION*.

Hona. Sir,

Boston, Sept. 25, 1740.

THIS is sent in answer to yours dated March 25.—I think I have for some time known, what it is to have Righteousness, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost—These, I believe, are the Liberties of the Children of God; but I can't say, I am free from indwelling Sin.—No; I find the Law in my Members, warring against the Law of my Mind, that makes me cry out—Who shall deliver me from the Body of this Death—I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. I can't see, wherein the Heterodoxy of the Article of our Church consists, which says, that Corruption remains even in the Regenerate: And, if after Conversion, we can neither Sin in Thought, Word, or Deed, I do not know, why our Lord taught us to pray to our heavenly

heavenly Father, Forgive us our Trespases,
&c.

I am sorry, Honoured Sir, to hear by many Letters, that you seem to own a sinless Perfection in this Life attainable; I think, I can't answer you better, than a venerable old Minister did a Quaker: "Bring me a Man that has really arriv'd to that, and I will pay his Expences, come from whence he will." I know not what you may think, but I do not expect to see indwelling Sin finish'd and destroy'd, 'till I bow down my Head and give up the Ghost. There must be Amalekites left in the Israelite's Land, to keep his Soul in Action; to make him humble, and drive him constantly to Jesus, for Pardon and Forgiveness. I know many abuse this Doctrine; and, perhaps, wilfully indulge Sin, or do not aspire after Holiness, because no Man is perfect in this Life. But what of that? Must I, therefore, assert Doctrines contrary to the Gospel? God forbid! And whether the viith of the Romans be applicable to a converted Person (as many great and eminent Saints have thought) is not at all to the purpose; there being many other Passages of Scripture, which shew that a sinless Perfection is not attainable here below: Such as these, There is no Man that liveth and sinneth not: In many things we offend all, &c. Yea, I know no Sin (except that against the Holy Ghost) that a Child of God (if God should withhold his Grace) may not be guilty of.

Whatever you may think of David, the Scripture says, he was a Man after God's own Heart: And yet, how did he fall! And if you will not admit Peter to be a converted Person when he

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deny'd

deny'd his Master, what will you say to Paul? Did not he Sin, think you (at least, were not his Passions irregular? and what is that but Sin?) when he speaks to the High Priest, and calls him whited Wall? &c. Besides, dear Sir, what a fond Conceit is it, to cry up Perfection, and yet cry down the Doctrine of final Perseverance? But these, and many other Absurdities you will fall into, because you will not own Election; and you will not own Election, because you cannot believe the Doctrine of Reprobation. What is there in Reprobation (I can see nothing) that makes it so horrid? I see no Blasphemy in holding the Doctrine, if rightly explain'd: If God might pass by all, he might pass by some—Judge you, if it is not a greater Blasphemy, to say, that Christ died for Souls now in Hell: Surely, dear Sir, you don't believe there will be a Goal-Delivery of damned Souls hereafter? Oh, that you would study the Covenant of Grace! Oh, that you were rightly convinc'd of Sin!—Elisha Cole on God's Sovereignty, and Veritas Redux, written by Dr. Edwards, are worth your reading. But I have done. If you think so meanly of Bunyan, and other Puritan Writers, I don't wonder you think me wrong. I find the Sermon both had expected Success; it hath set the Nation a Disputing: You will have enough to do, to answer Pamphlets: Two I have seen already. Oh that you would be more cautious in casting Lots! Oh, that you would not be so rash and precipitant; If you go on thus, dear Sir, how can I concur with you? It is impossible—I must speak what I know. This I write out of the the Fullness of my Heart: I feel my self an accursed Sinner. I look to Christ, and
mourn

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*mourn because I have pierced him. Honoured Sir,
pray for me. The Lord be with your dear Soul.
About Spring you may expect to see, ever, ever
yours in Christ,*

George Whitefield.

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1872 January 21st
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George W. White

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